







I am,  
Ever Yrs affectionately,  
Thomas Houston.



THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

AND

EXPOSITION OF JOHN XVII.;

WITH

PRAYER, OUR GRAND DUTY AND PRIVILEGE,

AND

EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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WHEN about half the sheets of this, his last book, had passed through the press, my father, obedient to the call of the Higher Master, went to enjoy his rest and reward. The end of a busy life found him still at his post, and it was not, till it was paralysed by death, that his hand slackened from his task. As he sat at his desk, writing this volume, he had a not very dim consciousness that his pen would be laid aside for ever when the last page would be finished. The current of his final thoughts, while he yet remained with us, flows in these pages. It will be interesting to those who have known him, and who have loved him, as they read these sentences, to think of them as something precious flung back by the writer, at the time when he went away through the gates into those regions of knowledge which mortal foot cannot tread. Could he write these sentences now and send them to us, in what new and glorious forms they would shape themselves, and in what clear light they would shine, we cannot conceive.

This book, in the preparing of which he took great delight, and the subject of which was ever very congenial to his mind and heart, is now issued,



not so much with the desire to perpetuate his memory, as with the loving hope that it may do, in another way, and in some details of it, the work which he did with all the passion of his soul, and with all his living activities. If it gives to one soul a single glimpse of the glory of Christ, the Advocate, it will not be issued in vain.

JAMES DICK HOUSTON.

R. P. MANSE, COLERAINE,  
*May*, 1882.

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# INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

### MEDIATORY OFFICES AND WORK OF CHRIST.

THE wondrous plan of human redemption originated in the sovereign wisdom and love of God from all eternity. The human race was regarded as fallen, apostate, and, as far as creatures could do, utterly lost and helpless. Man could only be recovered and reconciled to God by the intervention of a third person, who stood in the most intimate relation to the parties who were at variance. These were God and sinful men; and He who undertook to recover them was to be one with God, as partaker of the Divine nature. To effect this gracious purpose, He in due time was to assume our humanity, and become man's brother.

In the covenant of grace—framed in the counsels of Trinity—the second person of the Godhead was set up from everlasting, in accordance with His own voluntary engagement as Mediator and Surety; and the work which He undertook to accomplish was that of mediation—to bring sinners to God, and to be the perpetual medium of all intercourse and blessing between God and them. The entrance of sin rendered mediation indispensable to reconciliation and friendship with God. A mere act of grace could not cancel the offence against heaven's Sovereign, and restore to favour the guilty. But

for the plan of mediation, the human race would have perished without remedy, as did the rebel angels. The appointment of the Mediator was with God alone, who had the sole right, according to the good pleasure of His will, of admitting a satisfaction for the violation of His law, in the room of transgressors. In the appointment of His only begotten Son, as a Substitute and Surety for the guilty, He found an adequate and glorious ransom. The Mediator is the God-man. As God, He has all power; as man, He was susceptible of all sympathy and compassion. The sinner's all-sufficient help was thus laid upon One that was "mighty to save." Full and ample provision was made for repairing the injury to the law and honour of God; and at the same time for securing pardon to the guilty, and for restoring the moral image of God to the fallen and miserable. The mediatory appointment was the masterpiece of the scheme of the everlasting covenant; and the office and rank of the Mediator display in all time and throughout eternity, unbegun and unending, the riches and glory of the wondrous provision. In approaching to the highest mount of blessing on earth and in heaven, our greatest privilege is to come to "Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant" (Heb. xii. 24); and this is at once the foundation of all holy fellowship and the security for the enjoyment of all favour and blessing. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii. 5).

The mediation of Christ may be viewed in a twofold aspect—1. As it relates to God; and 2. In regard to man as a sinner. He is the Mediator



of reconciliation of sinners to God by His sacrifice and intercession. The guilty require to be pardoned, and an adequate satisfaction to be rendered to the justice of God for the transgressions of His law, before the sinner can be received on terms of favour and acceptance. This can only be done through an atoning sacrifice for sin. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." The mediation of Christ in heavenly intercession, cannot, as Socinians maintain, be sufficient to restore sinners to friendship with God. There is need of a firm ground on which the pleading of our High Priest in glory may securely rest, and of one which will render His advocacy available. This can be nothing else than His atoning sacrifice for sin. "Now once in the end of the world, hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."\* The death of the Substitute, as a propitiation for sin, is anterior to the work of the Intercessor in heaven, and is an indispensable prerequisite for its performance. This is indeed properly the grand fundamental act of Christ's mediation, on the performance of which all his other acts as Mediator are dependent. If our comfort and confidence, when conscious of sin, are that "we have an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous," the sure ground on which we have the warrant to entertain a joyful hope is that "He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii. 2). †

\* Hebrew ix. 26.

† "From the doctrine of merit held by the Church of Rome, the saints are appealed to to plead their own merits before the throne of God, as the ground of pardon or deliverance of those for whom they intercede. This, according to the Scriptures, is the peculiar work of Christ as our Mediator; assigning

Our Lord's mediation in heaven is by means of His intercession, and this is properly the *application* of the atonement, and in no sense the *making* of it. As the ancient High Priest might not enter the Most Holy place but by means of the blood of the appointed sacrifice, so our great High Priest entered heaven by the blood of His own all-perfect sacrifice. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."\* The atonement of Christ was required as a ransom for transgressors—as the payment to Divine justice for the sinner's great debt. His intercession in glory is needed to put the sinner in possession of the blessings which the atonement purchased. The two are inseparable, and both are indispensable for the sinner, if he would realize favour and friendship with God.

The work of mediation, as it respects the sinner's moral condition and blessing on earth, is carried on by *spiritual instruction*, and by *means of the Saviour's sovereign authority and power*. "Having made peace by the blood of His cross," He brings sinners near to God, and reconciles "the things in heaven and earth." This He does by spiritually enlightening

it to the saints, therefore, constitutes them mediators. As the Christian minister is not a priest, and as no man has any merit in the sight of God, much less a superabundance thereof, the whole foundation of this Romish doctrine is done away. Christ is our only Mediator, not merely because the Scriptures so teach, but also because He only can and does accomplish what is necessary for our reconciliation to God; and He only has the personal qualifications for the work."—Hodge's "Systematic Theology," vol. ii., p. 454.

\* Heb. ix. 12.

the understanding, renewing the heart, and reducing the will and the life to the obedience of faith. By acts of His glorious power, He quickens them that are spiritually dead, slays the enmity of the carnal mind, and transforms the moral nature into the Divine image and likeness. In the work of genuine conversion there is, in every instance, a glorious display of the character of the Mediator as the great provision of the covenant, the light and salvation of His people; and, at the same time, of His sovereign power and authority, as being “the Lord mighty to save,” and the appointed medium of blessing between God and men.

The mediatory office of the Redeemer is but *one*. Exclusive of all others, whether angels or departed saints, the risen Saviour perpetually mediates between God and man. No creature, however exalted, may interfere in the great affair. None, besides, are necessary, as none are adequate to perform the proper functions of a mediator. “Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?” \*

Although the mediatory office of the Redeemer is one, and exclusive, it has been generally regarded as *threefold*, including, as it does, the prophetical, sacerdotal, and kingly offices. This division is not only recommended as being useful for the sake of theological distinction, but as it rests on a clear and full scriptural basis, and as it is valuable and important in relation to the grand matters of human salvation. The official name of the Mediator—Messiah, Christ, the Anointed—has a distinct reference to the threefold division of offices; as anciently, prophets, priests,

\* Job v. 1.

and kings were consecrated by a sacred unction when they were invested with their several offices. In the first revelation of the covenant of grace, and the earliest discovery of mercy to our family on the back of the fall, the Saviour promised was exhibited in the character of His threefold offices. The promise of the woman's "seed" was from the Great Prophet of the Covenant. His "heel" bruised, pointed to His sufferings and death, as a substitute and atoning victim; while His bruising the serpent's "head," and His passing sentence on the guilty pair, the tempter and the ground, displayed His authority and power as a conquering Prince and exalted King. The most eminent personal types from the beginning prefigured the Saviour to come; showed Him invested with offices which, while separate and distinct, were occasionally combined in the same person. The ancient prophets were raised up in long succession not only to be the depositories of Divine revelation and instructors of the people, and for foretelling future events, but as designed types of Him who is the "True Light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." Speaking of Messiah promised to the fathers, Moses said—"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me; unto Him shalt thou harken."\* The advent of this Prophet was the constant expectation and hope of the church during the long intervening ages, from the time of Moses till the era of the Saviour's advent; and the prediction was regarded as not having been fulfilled in the appearance of the most distinguished of the prophets of the old economy. When the Priests and Levites

\* Deuteronomy xviii. 15.



from Jerusalem sent to John the Baptist messengers, they inquired—"Art thou that Prophet?"—this was the virtual confession of those who were most fully acquainted with the law and the past history of the nation, that the Prophet foretold by Moses had not yet appeared.

Aaron was the "anointed" priest of God, and his sons in succession were called to the office of the high priesthood, while the tribe of Levi was separated and set apart to perform the sacerdotal functions till the end of the former dispensation; and were designed types of the Great High Priest of our profession. David and Solomon and other pious princes of Judah typified the Saviour in His royal dignity, as Ruler in Israel, the Head of the heathen, and Governor among the nations. Under the whole Old Testament dispensation, the Saviour was displayed in His threefold offices—the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Covenant. In prophecy, type, and history, His excellency was set forth, and His glory displayed in these relations. He was proclaimed an "Interpreter," "One among a thousand," the "Morning Star," the "Messenger of the Covenant," the "Sun of Righteousness," a "Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." Frequently was He exhibited as a Priest, performing all sacerdotal functions. He was displayed as a Priest upon His throne—a "Priest after the order of Melchizedec." He is the Altar as well as the Victim. He bears the sins of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. Invested with royal dignity and authority, He excels in glory. He reigns as Mediator over the universe. He is Himself "a glorious high Throne to His Father's house." He is King and Head of the church, and



“Head over all things to the church.” On His vesture and thigh is inscribed the august title, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” His is a universal, everlasting kingdom, and “of His government and peace there shall be no end.”

When the Mediator became incarnate, and the long-promised Messiah appeared on earth, He claimed to be Himself the grand fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament that had spoken of the mediatorial offices. He expressly quoted and applied to Himself the predictions that referred to Him as a Prophet. He exhibited Himself as the great “High Priest of our profession,” and His death as the appointed sacrifice to put away sin. In the plainest and most expressive language, He claimed for Himself sovereign, universal authority, and spoke of the kingdom given Him as the stipulated reward of his spotless obedience and vicarious sufferings. The prophets of the Old Testament predicted, through the whole line of their prophecies, that the Messiah promised would be Prophet, Priest, and King. The New Testament writers uniformly represent the Redeemer as discharging all the proper functions of these offices.

It is observable and noteworthy that, while under the old economy generally the service of one typical individual was confined to one particular office, there were a few in whom two offices were united in one person. Moses was prophet and lawgiver and king in Jeshurun; and he even officiated as priest for a time, before the inauguration of Aaron and in his investment with the supreme sacerdotal office. Melchizedec was king, and performed some part of the priestly office. David was prophet and king. Even in these cases, however, the offices, though

combined, were still separate. The same person acted sometimes as prophet and sometimes as priest; but in no cases were the two offices confounded and inseparably combined. For men who were designated to the dignity and service of one particular office to arrogate the rank and intermeddle with the work of another, was regarded as a presumptuous offence, to be visited with the heaviest penalties. In no one recorded case in the Old Testament do we find the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King combined in one person; and there is no one type who shadowed forth Christ fully in all the parts of His mediatorial office. To the blessed Substance alone pertains the glory of the threefold offices contained in Himself, and continually exercised. Here is the present transcendent glory of His mediatorial character and work:—These offices are not only combined in His matchless person and in His undertaking and work for His people, but in their exercise they are ever inseparable. While one work is peculiarly that of some one of these offices, He yet in performing it exercises both the other offices; thus, while He officiates as a Priest at the altar, He impressively teaches as a Prophet; and the word which He speaks, and the blessing which He confers, express the authority and power of a King. As an impressive instance, may be specified the death of the Saviour—the grand appointed means for the world's redemption. While His atoning death was the act of the High Priest of our profession, it was at the time the fullest, most impressive teaching of the great Prophet of the Covenant; and in the acts of His grace in dying, the wonders wrought in the world of nature, and in His triumph over principalities and powers, when He was crucified in weakness, we

have the grandest manifestation of His universal Headship and Kingly glory.\*

The condition and circumstances of the redeemed of the Lord in all ages require the execution, on their behalf, of the threefold offices of the Redeemer. We unspeakably need a Saviour thus qualified, and we must receive Him as such, if we would be saved by Him. Because of our threefold misery, as guilty, fallen creatures, we can only obtain deliverance from One who is, in all respects, adapted to our case, and is fully fitted to relieve it. Blind, ignorant, and held under the power of darkness, we need a Prophet to instruct and enlighten us. For the guilty and sinful, He is a Priest to atone and make intercession, to free from sin and all its consequences, and to secure for our persons and services acceptance with God. As our Almighty King, He has all power to subdue us to

\* Turretine, vol. ii. (Edin. Edition, p. 347, 348), states the view which we have given in a succinct and expressive manner:—"The three offices are so conjoined in Christ, that not only He puts forth their distinct operations, but the same action proceeds at once from them, which not a little augments the wonder. Thus the cross of Christ, which is the altar of a Priest, on which He offered Himself as a victim to God, is at the same time the school of a Prophet, in which He teaches us the mystery of salvation, whence the gospel is called the word of the cross; and the trophy of a King, in which He triumphed over principalities and powers—(Col. ii. 15). The gospel is the law of a Prophet (Isaiah ii. 2, 3), the sceptre of a King (Psalm cx. 2), the sword of a Priest, by which he penetrates into the inmost divisions of the heart (Hebrews iv. 12), and the altar on which we should lay the sacrifice of our faith. So the spirit of wisdom, which, as a spirit, is the effect of prophecy; as a spirit of consolation is the fruit of the priesthood; and as the spirit of strength and glory is the gift of a king."

Himself, to defend and deliver us from all enemies, and to confer upon us all the benefits of His kingdom of grace and glory. How necessary to us, and unspeakably precious, are these offices of the Mediator! The salvation which we need includes, as essential elements, the spiritual illumination of the mind, which Christ as a Prophet imparts by His Word and Spirit—pardon, reconciliation, and cleansing from moral defilement; and these come only through the atoning blood of the High Priest and His prevailing intercession in heaven. Are we, moreover, rebels to be subdued and changed into willing subjects? We have spiritual enemies to be conquered and restrained; and these are blessings which we greatly need. For all this, as well as for the final admission to His everlasting kingdom, the Mediator has all authority and power in heaven and earth. He must reign till enemies—His own and His people's—have been brought down, His kingdom be universally established, and His saints put in full possession of the kingdom, which it is the Father's good pleasure to give them. What motives to joyful confidence and all holy obedience are supplied from the consideration of the Saviour's threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King! Faith, in its first actings, receives and appropriates Him in these distinct offices; and as we thus receive Him, so should we ever after walk in Him.\* Enlightened by the truth, we reflect the light, and increase in the knowledge of God. Our dependence for reconciliation and acceptance with God will ever be on the propitiation and intercession of our Great High Priest. And while we trust to our Almighty King for deliverance

\* Colossians ii. 6.



from the power of Satan and all enemies, we are under obligation to maintain true and leal allegiance to Him, to obey and submit to His authority, and to walk worthy of Him who has called us to His kingdom and glory.

The Saviour, while on earth, and engaged in carrying out His Surety-undertaking, executed His mediatorial offices in the order in which they are usually stated. He entered on His work, as the great Teacher sent from God, at His baptism, when an immeasurable unction of the Spirit was imparted to Him; and He prosecuted it by the instructions which He gave to His disciples, and by the discourses which He delivered, concerning which even enemies were constrained to testify, "Never man spake like this man." He also acted as the great Prophet of the Church, by the revelation which He gave to His apostles, and by the Spirit of inspiration imparted according to His promise. At His death, as a priest He offered the one great sacrifice to put away sin; and by His continual intercession He applies the atonement and perfects His people's salvation. As a King, He sits upon His mediatorial throne—ever reigning to bring down all enemies, to bestow all blessings, temporal and spiritual, and to bring His saints without fail to glory.

In the *application* of the redemption provided, the order of executing the mediatorial offices is different. As a King, He gives efficacy to the word and ordinances, converts the soul lying in sin, translates into His kingdom, and confers with princely munificence royal gifts. The blood of His atonement, applied for pardon and cleansing, is apprehended by faith; and through His intercession the Spirit is given to quicken and sanctify. Then the Prophet of



the Covenant makes wise to salvation, leads into all truth, and communicates, gradually but certainly, all saving discoveries of grace and glory.

The gospel of salvation is only fully set forth when Christ is exhibited in His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King; and then alone is He received for salvation, when He is beheld and embraced in these relations, and is practically known and submitted to in them. The judicious remark of *Ralph Erskine*, in his Discourses on Colossians ii. 6, is, that "many who hear the gospel are willing, at least in their own imagination, to receive Christ as a Prophet to instruct them, and as a Priest to pardon and bring them to heaven, who are not willing to submit to Him as a King to rule in and over them." "But," he adds, "Christ will never be a Saviour to any man who does not own Him as a Sovereign to subdue him to Himself, and to govern His whole heart and life." \*

\* See "Discourses on Receiving Christ Jesus the Lord, and walking in Him," by Ralph Erskine.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST—NATURE AND ENDS— QUALIFICATIONS AND FUNCTIONS.

IN the mediatorial office and work of Christ, His Priesthood occupies a prominent and peculiar place. It has a special relation to His other offices, and is fundamental to their due and efficient exercise. But for the redemption purchased by the shedding of His blood, there had been no revelation by His word as a Prophet, of pardon for the guilty, and of salvation for the sinful and polluted; and there would be no ground for the application of redemption by His power and authority as a King. The sacerdotal office of Christ has been justly said to be the basis of all the benefits which He has purchased by His death, and which, as a King, He is exalted to confer; and it therefore demands that all that pertains to it should be made the subject of careful consideration.

#### NATURE OF THE SAVIOUR'S PRIESTHOOD.

The NATURE of Christ's priesthood and its intrinsic importance merit special attention. A priest is one who is called, appointed, and set apart to act in "things pertaining to God." Men are sinners, and separated from God, and have no liberty of access to Him; Christ Jesus, as Mediator, and as a priest appointed, brings sinners nigh to God; transacts with God on their behalf, and is the medium to them of all gracious communications. For this end He

was “called of God ;”\* and this is the great work of His perpetual priesthood on earth and in heaven. The original name for priest in the Old Testament, which is uniformly applied to those who are appointed by God, and employed in Divine service, is *kohen*, which is somewhat obscure in its primary meaning. Its radical signification would seem to be a *chief ruler*. When applied to a minister in things sacred, it may retain a remnant of its original signification, as when the same person combined in himself the sacerdotal and regal offices. The leading idea of being a *kohen* or priest is to occupy an honourable and responsible position towards God, and to act for the good of others over whom he has charge. The same idea is attached to the term *Hiereus*, *archiereus*, which, throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews, is constantly applied to the Saviour, when His priestly work and that of Aaron are presented in marked and vivid contrast. The priest is one invested with a sacred office, and consecrated to minister in holy things. His office and work—like those of a prophet and king, which relate to the changes wrought on sinners—have a primary reference to God Himself. He was called of God and ordained for men. He offers satisfaction to God for human offences. He stands between God and sinners, makes intercession for them on the ground of the merits of His atonement, presents their persons and services for acceptance with God, and obtains for them all saving and eternal blessings. This, according to the Scriptures, is the main design of the Saviour’s priesthood. “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things per-

\* Hebrews v. 4, 5.

taining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”\* “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the righteous.” “And He is the propitiation for our sins.”†

The priesthood of Christ is *real* and not *figurative*, as is maintained by Socinians and others. Originating in the Divine purpose and covenant, He was set up from everlasting, as our great High Priest, to offer an adequate sacrifice for sin, and to bring sinners, fallen and guilty, to be reconciled to God. He was the real Substitute provided, and a true and proper Surety found to pay the debt which His people owed to God’s justice and violated law, and to suffer the penalty in the room of transgressors. It is expressly said—“No man taketh this honour or office to himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb. v. 4). This call of the Mediator to the priesthood was the Divine purpose in the covenant of grace, revealed in the predictions and precepts of the Old Testament, and in the promises of the New. The law given from Mount Sinai proclaimed the rule of His obedience; and the priests of Aaron’s line, with their various ritual functions, foreshadowed the Saviour in His priestly office, and the spiritual services which he was appointed to perform. The call and commission given Him in the Divine purpose from everlasting, and declared in various forms in the Old Testament, has respect to His assumption of human nature, and His work of obedience and suffering on earth. “Wherefore, when He cometh into the world He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for

\* Hebrews v. 1.

† 1 John ii. 1, 2.

sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do Thy will, O God."

The REALITY of the Lord's priesthood is apparent from the multiplied testimonies of Holy Scripture, as well as from the light of nature; and it is seen in the universal usage of all nations. He is expressly styled a priest in the prophecies of the Old Testament, as He was prefigured in numerous types that went before concerning Him. He was declared to be a priest for ever "after the order of Melchisedec"—a priest upon His throne (Psalm cx. 4; Zech. vi. 11-13). The priests of Aaron's line, set up by Divine prescription, in their office and service, showed the reality of the office of Jesus Christ as the great High Priest of our profession, and the work which, in that capacity, He was to perform. They were as shadows of good things to come: He was the glorious Substance. What they were symbolically, He was really. Chosen from among His brethren, He was to draw near to God on their behalf, to offer an expiatory sacrifice, and make intercession for them. The Mosaic priests might alone enter within the veil, and present the blood of the expiatory victim, and through them might the people approach unto God. The whole office and service of the Aaronic priesthood were fulfilled in Christ. All the sacrifices offered from the foundation of the world were typical of the one great all-perfect sacrifice of the Redeemer; as the many priests under the law symbolically represented the one glorious High Priest, who is "made after the power of an endless life."\* The ancient types and shadows would have been absolutely

\* Hebrews vii. 16.



destitute of all meaning if they had not referred to the promised Messiah, and found their fulfilment in the office with which He was clothed, and in the service which He rendered. They revealed a way of access to God, but could not open it up. They taught how sin could be taken away, but were unable of themselves to expiate human guilt, or purge the conscience. Christ Jesus is not figuratively, but Himself the way to the Father—a “new and living way”—and through Him sin is actually removed, and for ever purged away.

In the New Testament the perpetual priesthood of Christ is declared, and the nature and design of His office are set forth in terms borrowed from the ancient economy, but clear and explicit, and incapable of being understood figuratively. “After the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest.” “This man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” “Every priest is ordained”—for the benefit of men, and in their place—“in things pertaining to God, that He may offer both gifts and sacrifices.”\* Thus are we taught that Christ as our great High Priest, in no figurative and imaginary sense, but really and substantially, is appointed to draw near to God for others; to offer sacrifice in their behalf; and, by His interposition, to obtain for them favour and blessing.

The name Priest is not only given to Christ by way of emphasis, He has likewise ascribed to Him *all the qualifications* of an approved priesthood; and He is represented as performing all sacerdotal functions, and rendering them efficacious. He was appointed of God. He mediates, offers sacrifice, and ever

\* Hebrews vii. 15-24; viii. 3.



intercedes. He is of a different and higher order than the priesthood of Aaron; and His priesthood transcends in dignity and excellency all others. His sacrifice is so perfect and efficacious that it needs not to be repeated; and when mere human ministers, whether under the law or the gospel, are “not permitted to continue, by reason of death, this man, because He continueth ever, hath an *intransmissible* priesthood.”\* All human priesthoods, of whatever kind, are but shadowy, temporary, and evanescent; that of the Mediator is substantial, unchangeable, and ever-enduring.

The *natural consciences* of men have, in all ages, and among all nations, taught them the need of a class of men to deal immediately with God for them—to expiate guilt, of which they were conscious; to propitiate Divine anger by sacrifice; and to procure for them benefits of which they were unworthy. Hence they have had recourse to persons who were consecrated to this peculiar service, and who have ever been regarded as different from and above mere teachers of religion. These have always been regarded as standing between transgressors and the Deity, whom they had offended; as offering oblations to avert deserved wrath; and as the media of obtaining and conferring Divine favour and blessing. Thus the light of nature, equally with that of revelation, serves to establish the great truth that a *real*, and not a figurative priesthood, is required, that sinners may be reconciled to God; and the functions peculiar to it are needed, that they may enjoy the benefits of His friendship and love.

\* Hebrews vii. 24. Such is the import of the epithet in the original.

The two principal functions of Christ's priestly office are:—(1), *His obedience and sacrifice*; and (2), *His intercession*. And, as the result of both may be added—His *blessing* those in whose stead He obeyed and suffered, and for whom He intercedes. “Every priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices,” and it is indispensably necessary that “He should have somewhat to offer.” His business is to reconcile sinners to God; and for this purpose He must make atonement for their sins, and present their persons and services for acceptance with God. The other chief work of the priesthood is to make intercession for those whose case He has undertaken. This is not the mere offering of prayer, as one man does for another. It is the pleading of His Surety-engagement, and the merits of His obedience and sufferings, as the ground on which He claims that His prayers for His people should be heard and answered.

#### OBEDIENCE AND SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

As the obedience and sacrifice of the Saviour are indispensable to His work as an Intercessor, and are the sole foundation on which it rests and is efficacious, it seems requisite to present a brief view of the atonement made by our great High Priest, before giving an exhibition of His intercession in heaven.

Our Westminster Divines declare, “Christ executeth the office of a priest in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.”\* This comprehensive statement represents the priestly work of our Redeemer as being the atoning

\* Shorter Catechism, Quest. 25.

sacrifice which He offered to God, effecting for us propitiation and reconciliation, and His intercession continually on our behalf. The atonement of Christ, when properly reviewed, is not to be confined to His last sufferings and death. It comprehends His whole work of obedience and suffering while on earth—what is usually termed His *active* and *passive* obedience. It is that which He performed as the servant of Jehovah, and the Substitute of those whom He came to redeem, during all the period of His lowly abasement, from the manger to the sepulchre. His obedience was continuous, being carried out fully to the death, even the death of the cross. All the time He was on earth He was a *sin-bearer*, and at the same time He was, in consequence, a *sufferer* for sin. As He obeyed, He suffered; and in His sufferings, which were penal and embittered, He offered the highest acts of obedience to the will of His heavenly Father, and to the law of God, which was within His heart.

In considering the obedience and sacrifice of Christ He is to be regarded as—

(1) The SURETY and SUBSTITUTE of His people. In the arrangements of the covenant of redemption the Son of God, when He was set up by the appointment of the Father, and engaged His heart to draw near to God, willingly became the Substitute of those who were given Him to be redeemed, and at the same time their Surety. He took their place in law, and engaged to pay their debt, and suffer the penalty—the award of Divine justice—for their transgression. Our life was forfeited by the breach of the first covenant; and by the sin of Adam we had incurred the doom of eternal death. The Lord Jesus—the Second Adam—engaged in the

new covenant to redeem us from the curse of the violated law, and “to restore that which He took not away.”\* He “shook hands” as surety to pay our vast debt, when He fully knew what it would cost Him. Like Judah, when he offered himself surety for Benjamin, He became a bond servant for every elect one, and said, as He gave Himself in pledge—“If I bring him not unto thee and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.”† “By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better Testament.”‡

By different parties the proper Suretyship of the Redeemer is denied and strongly opposed; as by those who interpret His surety work as only that of a witness to confirm the truth; or by Socinians, who allege that Christ did not die in our stead a Substitute, but only for our benefit, to confirm His doctrine and give us an example of resignation and benevolence; or by such as deny the imputation of the sins of the saved to Christ, and are the advocates of a general indefinite atonement. It is a sufficient reply to these objections to the proper Suretyship of the Redeemer—from whatever quarter they come—to say that everywhere throughout the Scriptures our Lord’s Suretyship for His people occupies a conspicuous place in the revelation of mercy. The types that foreshadowed the Saviour to come plainly exhibited the fulfilment of the stipulations of the covenant as essential to the accomplishment of its promises. The rite of sacrificing, which was of Divine origin and institution, showed the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, spotless life, taken in

\* Psalm lxix. 4.

† Genesis xliii. 9.

‡ Hebrews vii. 22.

the place of that which had been forfeited, and the ratification of the promise by the shedding of blood. Under the Mosaic economy substitution was the prevailing idea through the whole system. The officiating priest was consecrated to bear the iniquity of the children of Israel; and the victim in the sin-offering was given into the hands of the priest, that it might bear the iniquity of the congregation.\* On the great day of atonement the High Priest, as Israel's representative, laid both His hands upon the head of the scape-goat, confessing over him all the iniquities of the people, and "all their transgressions in all their sins," thus putting them upon the head of the goat, that he might carry them away into the wilderness. The whole ritual services had a distinct reference to the covenant of promise, and taught impressively the doctrine of substitution. To the appointed victim was transferred the guilt of the offence, and it in consequence suffered the penalty of transgression. The promise was thus ratified, and the blessings promised were enjoyed as the covenant inheritance.

When our Lord appeared on earth as the great Antitype—the Substance of all ancient types—He was seen an actual Surety, in His whole work of obedience and suffering. From all everlasting He had voluntarily engaged to obey the precept of the Divine law, and to endure its penalty, in the room of His people. He was, in consequence, "made under the law" as a broken covenant, that He might obey and suffer the penalty of transgression, and thus "redeem them who were under the law." The whole guilt and burden of their sins were trans-

\* Leviticus x. 17.



ferred to Him, and all the punishment they deserved was visited upon Him. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all."\* Like as under the law, certain victims, from having the guilt of the offence reckoned to them, were expressly named *trespass* or *sin*, so Christ, as having the guilt of His people imputed to Him, is declared to be "made sin for us." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."† Hence, the punishment due to sin was visited upon Him. "He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree."‡

The Suretyship of Christ refers to His *obeying* the precept of the law, as well as His bearing the penalty of it. He obeyed in our room and stead; and thus, by His obedience in life, as well as by His death, He merited for us the blessed reward. As by the disobedience of the first Adam, as a public representative, our title to life was forfeited, and we incurred the penalty of death and the curse, so Christ, the second Adam, bore the penalty, and obtained by His surety-obedience, eternal life, with all its blessings. "By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. v. 19). "For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 17). §

\* Isaiah liii. 5.      † 2 Cor. v. 21      ‡ 1 Peter ii. 24.

§ "In the sacrificial ritual we have the atonement of Christ in a figure, and it possessed all the properties of the atonement we are pleading for in opposition to the views of the advocates for a more general and indefinite atonement. It was a vicarious atonement, the guilt of the offence being charged to

Christ is the "Surety of the New Testament," or covenant of redemption. His undertaking can only be on behalf of those who were given Him in the covenant. There are a definite number who were given Him to be redeemed from among men. For them alone He died and purchased eternal life; for them alone He pleads continually, and to these eternal life is secured, in virtue of His surety-undertaking. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me." "I pray not for the world, but for them that thou gavest me out of the world." The sheep for whom the "Good Shepherd" laid down His life are in His hand, and He gives "to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of His hand." That Christ might fully perform His undertaking in the covenant, it was necessary that he should come in a state of more than ordinary abasement. He assumed our nature in low external circumstances. He appeared in the condition of a "bond servant," in entire dependence on the will of His Father. He took our nature, with all its sinless infirmities, and was subject to all the trials to which we are exposed. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Our Lord's humanity was absolutely pure in His conception and birth, and throughout His whole life on

account of the victim to be slain in his room; it was an atonement made by satisfaction in kind -the life of the victim went for man's life, and its blood for man's blood; it was an atonement connected with God's covenant of promise, and limited in its objects to the people of the covenant; and it was an atonement which did not merely render pardon possible—it rendered it certain."— *Stevenson* on "The Offices of Christ," p. 156.

earth. He was conceived and born—"THAT HOLY THING." He became a "partaker," in part, "of flesh and blood, such as we have, but was only in the likeness of sinful flesh." In all points He was tempted or tried as we are, yet, in the fullest sense, He was "without sin." Such an High Priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

The *obedience* of Christ as our Substitute and Surety was *spotless* and *perfect*. It was yielded to the precepts of both tables of the Divine law. It was presented from the most holy principles, in the highest exercise of all holy graces, and carried out unfailingly to the end. It was *vicarious*, being offered by Him as a Substitute in the stead of His people. For them He fully satisfied the demands of law and justice. By His active and passive obedience, Christ as our Representative and Substitute, did and endured all that God's law demanded, and that His justice required. "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness sake: He hath magnified the law, and made it honourable." The pre-eminent excellency of the obedience of Christ as our Surety arises from the dignity of His person. He obeyed the law and endured the penalty in His human nature, but the person who obeyed and suffered was Divine. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered." The righteousness which He wrought out is, in the fullest sense, "the righteousness of God"—not only as having been divinely provided and fulfilled by Him who is "God over all," but as applied by God the Spirit, and of infinite intrinsic value. "Now the righteousness of God without the law is

manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe."

The *finishing act* of the Saviour's priestly office on earth was His *death as a sacrifice for sin*, and is the principal part of His service as a priest. He was the grand victim for human transgression—the one spotless and all-perfect offering to which all preceding sacrifices look forward—the glorious substance of all former types. Our Lord's agony in the garden and on the cross were the summing up and completion of His sufferings in their greatest intensity. They were diversified, as they had been throughout life—in reproach, shame, and disgrace cast upon Him—in bodily torture and mental anguish. He suffered from the agency of men and devils; and "it pleased the Father to bruise Him and put Him to grief." Christ Jesus, as a Priest to God, and acting for us, provided and presented a sacrifice for sin. He was at once the Priest, the Victim, and the Altar, such as no type that foreshadowed Him could fully represent Him. The sacrifice which He offered was His whole spotless humanity; the altar was His Divine nature, which upheld Him in His overwhelming suffering, and gave infinite worth and efficiency to His sufferings and death. This was *necessary*, in order that Christ as our Substitute should endure the infliction of God's judicial anger in all its dread extent. He was made to know, as none other could, "the power of God's wrath." He was made a curse for us, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law. In the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross, He drank the cup surcharged with all the elements of Divine wrath;



and His soul was “amazed,” and “exceeding sorrowful unto death.” For a season He was forsaken of God, enduring a total suspension of the sensible enjoyment of the Father’s love, and a dreadful impression of wrath. He suffered “the death of deaths”—death under the curse—what was equivalent to an eternity of punishment, only without the remorse that arises from personal corruption in the sufferer.

The death of Christ was, in the fullest sense, *voluntary*. He laid down His life of Himself; no man took it from Him. He yielded Himself up to those who came to take Him, when He could have commanded ten legions of angels and destroyed them. At the appointed time He went up to the mount of sacrifice. He was “straitened” till His baptism of blood was accomplished. The “yielding up of the ghost” was a priestly act—completing His sacrifice, and not the mere breathing out of His Spirit. It was an *atoning* death, a sacrifice in the room of the guilty, the endurance of all that they deserved, and a full price paid for their vast debt—an adequate ransom for their forfeited life. It was *accepted* by God, to whom it was offered, and was infinitely *meritorious* and *expiatory*.\* Christ “loved us, and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”† The Father, in raising Christ from the dead, acted as the creditor, setting free the confined debtor thereby, and declaring that He was fully satisfied, and that payment of the debt would never be demanded a second time. Again, when He received Him to glory, and set Him at His own right hand, in the heavenly places, He

\* Hodge.

† Ephesians v. 2.



proclaimed to the whole universe that the work which He had finished for His people was pleasing in His sight, and of boundless merit. The sacrifice of Christ, our great High Priest, is eminently *expiatory*. As the sacrifices under the law were offered by sinners on account of sin, and were the ordained means of expiating or purging sin away, so the death of Christ was an atoning offering for sin. He bore the guilt of our sin, and endured in our stead its penalty; and, in consequence, He blots out as “a thick cloud our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins.” All His people’s sins He casts into “the depth of the sea.” In fulfilment of the stipulations of the covenant, ratified by atoning blood, it is declared—“In those days, and at that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sin of Judah, and it shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”\* “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.”†

The death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin had, in the purpose and plan of human redemption, *a definite object*, and *its benefits were designed for a definite number*. The atonement of Christ was particular and not universal. The doctrine of Aminians, Hopkinsians, and others, that Christ died for all mankind, is opposed to the scriptural view of this Suretyship and to the doctrine of sacrifices, since these require that those for whom He engaged and suffered should have the full benefit of His substitution. If any perish for whom Christ died then for them He died in vain. This renders it uncertain whether any will be saved

\* Jeremiah l. 20.

† Hebrews viii. 12. \*

by Him; it is, moreover, derogatory to the justice of God in requiring from the sinner payment a second time for a debt that has been already paid and the payment accepted, and it makes Christ shed His precious blood for many who at the time of His death were consigned to eternal misery. That the extent of the atonement only contemplated the elect to be redeemed is manifest from the clearest and fullest scriptural testimony, and from the unanswerable deductions of right reason. Christ is said to lay down His life for the sheep; to die to save His people from their sins. He gave Himself for us, to “redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” His death is ever declared to be *a sacrifice for sin*; and this plainly implies that it was offered for individuals—having their sins and the penalty due to them transferred to the innocent victim, and these expiated by its death. If Christ died as a Representative and Surety in the covenant of redemption, it follows that the salvation which His death procured was only for those for whom He engaged, and that its purchased benefits are to be theirs exclusively for ever. The Saviour, in His last priestly prayer, declared—“I pray not for the world, but for them that thou hast given me;” and this plainly implies that for such alone He suffered and died. His intercession is co-extensive with His atonement. It can never be believed that He would refuse to plead with the Father for any that had been given Him to be redeemed, and for whom He had shed His precious blood. In fine, our Lord’s mediatorial life in heaven proves that His atoning death was particular and not for all mankind. The Scriptures ever represent His work on earth as a priest, and His life in glory as having the

same objects. He died for the sins of the same persons whom he rose to justify. He saves by His life those who were reconciled to God by His death, and these are not the whole human family, but those who are chosen and called to be saints, and brought home to glory. His work in heaven, as a priest upon His throne, is to exercise all power in heaven and in earth, and to plead continually and effectually in order to bring to Him many sons to glory, and to give eternal life not to all the world but only to those whom the Father hath given Him, and who hath received the adoption of sons.

#### ENDS AND RESULTS OF THE ATONEMENT.

There are many important ENDS of the atoning work of Christ as a Priest, and the results are most valuable and excellent.

In relation to God, it *illustrates His character*, and displays *and vindicates the principles of His moral government*. The remedy provided for man's sin by the death of Christ shows the "manifold wisdom of God," as His power is displayed in upholding the Redeemer under His sufferings, as well as in the effect resulting from His death. Christ crucified—to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness—is "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation" to them that believe. The moral attributes of God especially shine forth in the brightest lustre and in the fullest harmony in the atoning work of the Redeemer. The Divine holiness was seen in noontide splendour, when God spared not His own Son, and poured upon Him the vials of His wrath as He stood the Substitute for the guilty. God's justice appeared in its most awful aspect, and received its highest vindication, when the sword was

commanded to awake and smite the Shepherd—the Man, Jehovah’s fellow. The grace and mercy, the love and truth of God, received in the atoning work of Christ their most commanding and attractive illustration. The death of Christ was the grandest possible display of Divine love; mercy appeared in its greatness and surpassing condescension. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” \*

In the atonement of Christ there is seen as in no other manifestation in the universe, *the harmony and transcendent beauty of all the Divine perfections*. “Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” † The claims of the authority and law of God are here fully met; and the sanctions of God’s moral government are maintained. The stability of the Divine law is exhibited in connection with the unfailing rectitude of the Lawgiver. The obedience of Christ, when He came “not to destroy the law but to fulfil it,” sheds the highest honour upon the rule of moral rectitude. Higher than the obedience of ministering angels was that of the Mediator, as He stooped down to obey every Divine precept, and to give His life a ransom for sinners. Here He is seen “magnifying the law and making it honourable.” Christ is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” ‡ Every principle of God’s moral government is vindicated in the obedience and death of the Surety. Under the highest

\* 1 John iv. 10.

† Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11.

‡ Rom. x. 4.



and most awful sanctions, universal obedience is enforced. While God can pardon and receive into favour the guilty, He does this in the way that provides for maintaining His truth, and exhibiting the glory of His justice and mercy. He can be just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. Even the condemning perfections of God, His inflexible justice, unstained holiness, and immutable truth, now claim the pardon and salvation of the sinner, on the ground of the Saviour's Surety-righteousness. The pillars of God's throne are established on the strongest basis. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne; mercy and truth go before His face." \*

As it refers to sinners of mankind, the atonement presents a *true and full satisfaction for sin*, and so provides *reconciliation to God for the sinner*. Christ "offered Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice," and thus "to reconcile us to God." He became "a curse" for those who were under the curse; to show that His death was a full satisfaction, He is said to have "obtained eternal redemption for them."† For them He finished transgression, made an end of sin, and "brought in everlasting righteousness."‡ He was set forth to be a propitiation. He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree;"§ and, like as sin was typically laid on the ancient scape-goat, He bore them all away. The resurrection of the Saviour evinces fully the perfect satisfaction of His atoning death. His ascension to heaven, and sitting at the right hand of the Father, show clearly that, as the reward of His meritorious obedience, all

\* Ps. lxxxix. 14.

† Heb. ix. 12.

‡ Dan. ix. 24.

§ 1 Peter ii. 24.



blessings are received for His people. The fruit of the atonement made by Christ is eternal redemption. This includes deliverance by means of a price paid as a ransom, and by an act of power. The price paid was the life of Christ as a substitute. The deliverance through our Lord's death was deliverance through a ransom, or *antilutron*, life given for life. This ransom was given to God as an offended Judge, and the obedience offered was unto death. Hence are we said to "have redemption through His blood." "By His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."\* This redemption, resulting from the atonement, is full, complete, and everlasting. It includes freedom from all penal and moral evil; deliverance from the guilt of sin by a full sealed pardon; from its power and pollution by sanctification—from the world and from all enemies, from death and the grave. The redemption obtained by Christ's death contains all positive blessings of the highest value. We are redeemed to God, brought near to Him here, and to likeness and fellowship with Him in glory. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." †

\* Heb. ix 12.

† Isaiah xxxv. 10.

## CHAPTER II.

### INTERCESSION.

IMPORT—EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE TERMS—CHRIST  
A PRIEST INTERCEDING BEFORE HIS INCARNATION  
WHEN ON EARTH—AND NOW IN HEAVEN.

THE second principal function of Christ's priestly office is His *making intercession*. This is, in a variety of aspects, to be regarded as of transcendent importance; and correct and full views of it will be found eminently conducive to the edification and comfort of the church, the hopes of the saints, and the progress and triumph of the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth. The Redeemer's intercession is essential to the perfection of His priesthood. As, in ancient times, a priest while he ministered at the altar presented a sacrifice for sin, and offered supplications for the people, so Christ's oblation of Himself is accompanied and followed by His intercession on behalf of those for whom He suffered and died. The two functions are inseparably conjoined; and, without the performance of both, His glory as a priest could not be fully displayed, nor His interference for the salvation of His people be available. The covenant of redemption, in which Christ was set up as Mediator, rendered His intercession necessary for the bestowment of the blessings which it provided. The grand condition of the covenant was the atoning death of Christ as a satisfaction to Divine justice; but when this was offered it was further required that the covenant

should be administered in applying the redemption purchased. This could only be done by Him to whom the whole dispensation of covenant-blessings is entrusted; and this is effected directly and perpetually by His all-powerful intercession.

The priesthood of Christ is ever represented as perpetual and unchangeable; and to the acts which He performs in heaven are ascribed the deliverances and blessings which we receive—the carrying on and completion of our salvation. We are freed from condemnation, because Christ is risen, and is “at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” He is a priest upon His throne. He “continueth ever, and hath therefore an unchangeable priesthood.” “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession.”\* By His oblation on earth as a priest, He offered once for all; by His priestly work in heaven, He carries into effect and application all the designs of His love and mercy to ransomed sinners, and puts them into possession of all the benefits which were obtained for them by His death. The blood of the Lamb was shed to make an atonement for sin; it must be sprinkled on the mercy-seat in glory, and be made to speak in God’s ear, and to the sinner’s conscience, before the “better things” of pardon and peace can be recognized. The intercession of Christ as our exalted High Priest occupies in some respects a more conspicuous place than any other of His priestly acts. His work of atonement was limited to the brief period of His manifestation in the flesh on earth; but He was actually engaged as

\* Hebrews vii. 24, 25.

an Advocate and Intercessor from the first revelation of mercy in our world till His incarnation. He pleaded for His people, while He obeyed and suffered; and now that He has entered into "the holy place not made with hands" in heaven, He "ever lives to make intercession." The advocacy of our Surety is carried on throughout all time; and when time-measures shall have come to an end throughout eternal ages, it will be unceasingly conducted for ends the most beneficent and glorious, as the great work of His everlasting priesthood.

The Scripture terms employed in the original (*entunchanò, entuexis*,)\* primarily denote getting close to one—having intimate dealing and connection with him. It carries the idea of mediating so as to heal differences, or of making entreaty for one, so as to obtain benefits. It is sometimes, though rarely, joined with the proposition *against*, as when Elijah is said to "make intercession against Israel."† But when it is connected with *hyper*, for, it denotes dealing with God in order to obtain benefits for others. As applied to the priestly actings of Christ, it is His representing the cause of His people to the Father, pleading against their enemies, and seeking that they may enjoy all the blessings of salvation. In such a work of intercession and advocacy Christ is continually engaged. He has this perpetual intercourse with the Majesty in the heavens for the spiritual good of His saints, and on this they are dependant for all blessings for time and eternity.

\* "The verb signifies to meet or talk with one on our behalf."—*Hodge's Theol.*, vol. ii., p. 592.

† Romans xi. 2.

The advocacy or intercession of Christ was revealed from the beginning and held forth in prophecy and type long before His coming in the flesh. Called to the office of priest in the covenant, He is represented as asking a people for an inheritance, and benefits spiritual and eternal for them; and the Divine promise assures Him that they shall be given Him. He was predicted as pleading for those to whom He shows His righteousness, that they may be delivered from going down to the pit, since He has found a ransom.\* When He has completed His sacrificial work on earth, He obtains as His reward “a portion with the great,” and He “divides the spoil with the strong,” as He “bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” † As the Mediator Angel, in the exercise of His royal priesthood, He intercedes on behalf of the church, low and oppressed—“O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years!” ‡

Ancient types, in diversified ways, prefigured Christ's priesthood as His people's Intercessor. Abel's accepted sacrifice foreshadowed the one great Sacrifice for sin, as his blood, speaking after his death, typified the blood of the Saviour, who though dead, ever lives, pleading for pardon and peace to the guilty. Melchizedec, as a king-priest, praying and blessing Abraham, exhibited the royal priesthood of the eternal Son, bestowing blessings of the highest value upon His people. Abraham, pleading for Sodom; Moses acting as an intercessor for Israel;

\* Job xxxiii. 23.

† Isaiah liii. 12.

‡ Zechariah i. 12.



and Aaron, with his censer, standing in the breach that the people might not be slain, were typical persons, exhibiting by significant actions the work and spirit of the great High Priest in drawing near to God on His people's behalf, and the efficacy of His intercession. The incense perfuming the sacrifices, the rite of sprinkling, and the priestly prayers that accompanied the offerings, shadowed forth our Lord's perpetual and acceptable advocacy, and were to ancient believing worshippers a "veiled gospel." The service of the high priest on the great day of anniversary atonement prefigured vividly the intercession of the Redeemer, as inseparably connected with His one perfect sacrifice for sin. His entrance into the most holy place with blood, a censer of burning coals, and incense, typified the entrance into heaven of our great High Priest, with His own blood, and His all-prevalent intercession, grounded on His sufferings and death, as a satisfaction for sin; his bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel in his pectoral and shoulder-pieces, showed Christ as the representative and advocate of all His people in heaven, bearing the iniquity of their holy things in the presence of the Lord, presenting their persons and services for acceptance, and obtaining, that He may confer upon them, all blessings.

Not merely in prophecy and type is Christ held forth, in the earlier part of revelation, interceding for His people, He *actually executed* this function of the priesthood *before His* manifestation in the flesh, and during His state of humiliation, as He is now *the only* and perpetual Intercessor for His people in heaven.

1. *Before His incarnation.* Immediately on the back of the Fall, there was a revelation made of the

plan of salvation through the new covenant. It was necessary that the administration of the covenant should be forthwith entered upon, if man was to be rescued from the consequences of the penal apostacy and be restored to Divine favour. Deliverance by means of a substitutionary sacrifice was made known; and this was appointed to be henceforth the only way of acceptable worship. Expiatory offerings pointed forward to the future sacrifice of the promised Seed, and exhibited Him as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." So soon as they were instituted, those for whom they were offered received the blessings which they procured by the intercession and advocacy of the priest of the covenant, not merely in type but in actual possession. Prayer was offered to God in His name. He was made known to the fathers as the Angel of God's presence or face, to stand for them before the Lord, that He might introduce them, and procure audience and acceptance for them.\* When Joshua, the high priest, stands to minister in defiled garments, and Satan stands at his right hand to resist him, the Angel of the Covenant appears on his behalf, rebukes the adversary, and pleads as an Advocate the merits of the work of His grace to obtain for him all privilege and blessing.† In the time of the church's forsaking and affliction, Christ, the exalted Advocate, declares—"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him."‡ And as expressive of His perpetual intercession in heaven for His people, and its sure and blessed

\* Isa. liii. 9.    † Zech. iii. 1-4.    ‡ Isa. viii. 16, 17.

results, He proclaims, rejoicing in His work, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." \*

2. *While on earth engaged in mediatory obedience*, He was constantly employed as an Intercessor and Advocate with the Father. The most marked and prominent trait of His spiritual character was His prayerfulness. In one of the prophetic psalms, which is applied to the suffering Saviour in the New Testament, and which *Luther* justly regards as spoken by Himself, in the depth of His abasement He says, "*but I prayer*," † as indicating that this was the habitual element of His spirit—that His whole heart and life were expressed in prayer to God. He who needed not, as we do, to pray for Himself, offered prayers fervent, importunate, and continual in behalf of those who were given Him to be redeemed, and for covenant-support and success in His undertaking. Prior to entering on the great and special actions of His ministry, He prayed. He withdrew His disciples into private places and prayed with them. He spent whole nights on the mountain top in prayer. His life-imparting miracles were performed in connection with prayer. He prayed for His disciples, that their faith might not fail them when tempted. In His last agony "He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." He prayed for forgiveness for the enemies who nailed Him to the cross. As He went with His disciples from the upper chamber to the garden, it was to a place—a retired scene, whither He had often resorted with

\* Isaiah lxii. 1.

† Psalm cix. 4.

them, doubtless for social and intercessory prayer. And ere He left the place of assembly, He offered at their head His "great priestly prayer," John xvii.—the specimen of His perpetual and all-prevalent intercession in glory. Thus, in every part of our Lord's Surety-obedience, and in the whole course of His sufferings unto the death, He is seen in the execution of His priestly office, appearing in the presence of God for them, seeking and obtaining for them all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings.

3. The intercession of our great High Priest is pre-eminently that *which He carries on in heaven*. This is so connected with the glory of His exaltation, and the accomplishment of His purpose for the full salvation of His redeemed, and the universal establishment of His kingdom, that it is represented as embracing His whole life and work in heaven: "*He ever liveth to make intercession.*" The same advocacy which He carried on till the end on earth, He continues in glory, though in a different manner. He no longer addresses God as a sin-offended Judge, requiring to be pacified, but as God reconciled by the blood of His cross—His own and His people's Father. Not as a bond-servant—not under a sense of weakness and sin-bearing—does He plead "with strong crying and tears;" but, as the Son of God with all Divine authority, He intimates His will that His people should be with Him where He is, to behold His glory. On the ground of covenant-stipulation, and on the footing of His boundless merit, He claims for His saints the possession of all that the love of the blessed Trinity provided—of all that His precious blood purchased. As He manages their cause in heaven, He sits a priest upon His throne. The travail of His soul He

sees, and is satisfied. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hand. No case that He undertakes can possibly fail. No petition that He presents is returned unanswered. Those who are redeemed by His blood are saved by His princely and priestly life. Thus, from the beginning, through all the ages and dispensations of the past till the consummation of all things, and throughout an unending eternity, the glory of the Mediator, connected with the highest privilege and happiness of the saints, is brightly seen in His constant, loving, and glorious intercession.



## CHAPTER III.

### NATURE OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION—GENERAL VIEWS OF WHAT HE DOES AS AN INTERCESSOR.

CONCERNING the intercession of Christ as founded on His finished atonement, as the giving effect to the design of the Saviour's sacrifice, it is to be regarded as *carried on in heaven*. The place where He intercedes is the seat of the Divine Majesty, "the holy place not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." When He had completed His undertaking on earth, and had offered a perfect accepted oblation to take away sin, He ascended to glory, not only as a conqueror to receive the reward of His finished work, but also as our High Priest, to be henceforth for ever employed in a higher and more glorious sphere of His ministry. As the ancient high priest, on the day of solemn atonement, after he had slain the appointed victims, entered with typical blood within the veil on behalf of the congregation of Israel, so our great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, has passed through the material heavens, and gone into the holiest of all—the immediate Divine presence, to be perpetually engaged in sacerdotal functions for our benefit and blessing. The different Scriptural representations of the attitude and work of the ascended Redeemer in heaven convey the best idea of the general nature of His intercession, and are therefore deserving of careful study and the most attentive consideration.

1. Christ's work in heaven is said to be *His*

*appearing in the presence of God for us.* In a bright and most significant passage in the epistle to the Hebrews,\* wherein the purification by the blood of typical sacrifices is explicitly taught, the entrance of the ancient high priest into the most holy place of the Mosaic tabernacle, and the entrance of the Mediator into heaven, are compared and contrasted, and the end of His entrance is declared, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" and the representation throughout is by way of vivid comparison and contrast. The passages contrasted are the Aaronic high priest and Jesus Christ the High Priest of the Christian profession; the entrance of both is *sacerdotal*, not *regal* or *triumphant*; and the design was to *appear* for the people, to present their supplications to God, and to obtain for them acceptance and blessing. Then, by the terms employed, there is expressly shown the transcendent glory of the Saviour's entrance into heaven, and the importance of the end for which it was made. The high priest of old entered only into an earthly sanctuary, to minister before a material ark and mercy-seat. Christ has gone into heaven itself, the real presence of Jehovah's glory, to stand before His face, and minister perpetually in His temple. The ancient tabernacle and its utensils were but "figures of the true"—types and resemblances of the things of the gospel. The place of Christ's priestly entrance and ministry is the *real* and *substantial*, as opposed to all that is *typical* and *shadowy*. The *time* of this sacerdotal ministry is noted—it is *now*, at this

\* Hebrews ix. 24.

present season; a perpetual now. Aaron and his successors might enter into the presence of the material mercy-seat only once in the year. When they came forth, the uplifted veil dropped down again, and all entrance was barred till the annual return of the feast of atonement. But Christ's entrance now is expressive of the duration of the whole period of His continuance in heaven till the consummation of all things. He needs to make no second entrance. Never will He depart *out of the* heavenly sanctuary to offer a new sacrifice, as did the high priest of old. His entrance is full and complete. On till the end of time, and throughout eternity, it can constantly be said, He that has entered into heaven itself, "now appears in the presence of God for us."

This presupposes an antecedent offering of Himself as a sacrifice for sin and the accomplishment of the work of our redemption. It was only with the blood of an expiatory sacrifice that the high priest could enter the sanctuary and appear in the presence of God for Israel. So it was only when the Saviour had glorified the Father on earth, finishing the work that was given Him to do, that He could say, "Now I come to Thee." Alive and living for ever, He enters the most holy place, and stands before the throne of God. This appearance of Christ as our great High Priest in heaven is His glorious manifestation—the visible presentation of Himself to God. Not by vision, or through a veil, as when Moses on the summit of the Mount stood before God, nor as Aaron ministered before the ark and saw the symbol of the Divine glory, does Christ appear in the presence of God. He stands before God face to face, beholding the Father, and beheld by Him, without any medium

or interposing veil. To the Father, as the Head in the covenant-transaction, He presents Himself as having accomplished all that He undertook to do, and He presents Himself to God for approval and acceptance. He appears for us, not merely for our good, but as our Representative, and as our Advocate making a law-appearance in our behalf. In His person, by the eternal Spirit in Him, He is our eternally present offering before God. With greater nearness to Him than the ancient high priest when he bore on his pectoral and shoulder-pieces the names of the tribes of Israel, we are one with the High Priest of our profession, when He appears in the presence of God. The redeemed are all brought back and set before God, when their blessed Head and Representative comes before God. He shows Himself for them, as He says, "Behold I and the children which Thou gavest me." The sight of the Well-beloved satisfies Jehovah on their behalf. Never does He look on them or their services as they are in themselves. He beholds them always in the face of His Anointed dear; and as they are certainly commended to the Father's love and care, He can "see no iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel."\* The believer's high privileges resulting from the Saviour's appearance for them in heaven are clearly exhibited in the weighty words of *Dr. Owen*—"They enjoy all the fruits of God's eternal love—all the rich benefits of Christ's atoning death. How dear and powerful a testimony does this appearance of Christ in the presence of God for His people bear to His continued love and compassion for them! How full and ample the confidence and hope which it inspires

\* Numbers xxiii. 20.



of all salvation-blessings to the church! Amidst the splendour of His personal glory, He cherishes constant loving care of His church on earth, and is ever actively engaged managing their concerns. The fountain of life and grace is in God seated on His throne, surrounded by "a rainbow in sight like an emerald;" and from the throne issue the waters of salvation, like a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, "proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." The Lamb standing before the throne continually, procures the actual application of all grace and mercy to the church; and every member of it depends for all needed blessing on His appearance before God, and the intercession wherewith it is accompanied.\*

2. In interceding in heaven, Christ Jesus *presents continually the memorials of His finished atonement*. He "stands in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, *The Lamb as it had been slain.*" † He is still in our nature, as the victim that on earth bled and died in the room of His people; and the marks of His sufferings are still visible upon Him. The ancient high priest carried with him atoning blood into the most holy place, and this was the sole ground of his obtaining acceptance and a favourable response to his prayer for the people, and the objects of his sacerdotal acting. In like manner, Christ Jesus, "not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." ‡ This presen-

\* Owen's Works, vol. xxiii., p. 385.

† Rev. v. 6. So are the words in the best MSS. in the original.

‡ Heb. ix. 12.



tation of the memorials of Christ's sacrifice is like a constant renewal of the one perfect offering whereby God is propitiated, and sinners reconciled; and it is of potent efficacy for the application of redemption. As the Lamb slain stands before the throne, He puts the Father in remembrance of Surety-engagements perfectly fulfilled, of promises of life and salvation given to the covenant-seed, of obedience offered and sufferings endured that brought a revenue of glory to all Divine perfections; and, in consequence, the claims which He advances are the highest and irresistible. If, when God beheld the bow in the cloud, He remembered the everlasting covenant, and declared that He would not again destroy the earth with a flood; if the blood of the passover sprinkled upon the Israelitish houses was the mark to the angel of destruction that he should not come nigh them to slay them, how much more must the precious memorial of Christ's atoning sacrifice, constantly living and fresh, bring before God the purpose and stipulations of the covenant of peace, and present the most powerful and prevailing appeals to His character and infinite perfections to grant whatever the Intercessor asks—to confer on the ransomed of the Lord all blessings of grace and glory! The Lamb as it had been slain is alone found worthy to open the book and unloose the seals thereof; and in this high administration given Him as the reward of His sufferings and death, His people become partakers of rich and manifold blessings. They are redeemed to God by His blood, “out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, and are made a kingdom of priests,\* reigning upon the earth. “Thou hast

\* Rev. v. 9.

given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips. He asked life of Thee; Thou gavest it Him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in Thy salvation: honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon Him." \*

3. Our adorable High Priest in interceding *intimates His will that the blessings which He purchased should, according to covenant-stipulation, be conferred upon His saints.* His Surety-engagement bound Him to satisfy the demands of Divine justice for His people's offences. When this was done by His sufferings and death, He could of right claim the reward guaranteed to Him by the word and oath of the Father in the covenant. This reward was not only honour and comely majesty for Himself; it was likewise all salvation-blessings for the redeemed. When their case is before the throne, guilty in themselves, the Intercessor demands their freedom from condemnation on the ground that He paid in their stead the ransom price; that He bore as their Substitute all the punishment which they deserved; and that it was promised to Him that, in consequence, they should be delivered from going down to the pit. His perfect righteousness "brought in" for them claims that, on the footing of justice as well as of mercy, their guilt should be cancelled, and their manifold pollutions purged away. His victory on the cross over all His people's enemies secures that their accusers should be confounded. The voice of their brother's blood effectually silences all challenges of guilt and sin from our own consciences, and from devils and men; and is continually heard in God's ear, claiming the bestowment of the high and

precious blessings which it purchased for them. The Intercessor in all this is a "a Priest upon His throne," invested with supreme authority, and clothed with majesty most bright. Not, as when in the days of His humiliation, He pleaded as a servant, "with strong crying and tears," and with lowly submission to the Father's will; not like as saints on earth plead for others, in weakness and fear, and with unutterable groanings, does our Intercessor within the veil carry on His priestly work in glory. While He offers substantial prayer and petition, He ever speaks with power and authority. In His last priestly prayer on earth He lays the foundation of all that He asks, on the Father having given Him all power in heaven and earth.\* He then prays for His people who have been given Him, and not for the world; and seeks for their preservation, sanctification, and mercy in no hesitating or doubtful words, but in terms that indicate the certainty that what He asks shall without fail be given. And, at the conclusion, His last great petition expresses in the clearest and most forcible language the constant mode of His intercession in heaven for His saints, "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."† What high encouragement is thus ministered to the saints that whatever they ask in prayer, in Christ's name, and according to His will, they shall assuredly obtain, because their Intercessor on high presents the same petitions, enforcing them with uncontrollable power and authority!

4. In His priestly work in heaven, the Saviour continually acts as His people's *Advocate*.

\* John xvii. 2.

† John xvii. 24.

In 1 John ii. 1, it is declared, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The title *Paracletos*, as employed in sacred Scripture, is used in a variety of meanings, such as *Comforter*, *Teacher*, *Exhorter*, *Advocate*. In its primary sense, it denotes one called upon for help of whatever kind. As a law term, used in ancient times in Greek and Roman courts of justice, it was applied to one who extended help to the poor, the friendless, the guilty, by meeting the accusations laid in against them, maintaining their cause, and employing all his skill and influence to procure their acquittal. When applied to the Holy Spirit, as it is in John xiv. 16, the term *paraclete* exhibits Him as an Exhorter, a Teacher, a Comforter; and when the common title of Advocate or Comforter is given to the Spirit and the Son, it not only expresses their unity of nature, but declares, too, that both those Divine persons are engaged, though in a different way, in maintaining the cause of the saints. Christ Jesus is our sole Advocate in the court of heaven. The Spirit is an Intercessor in us on earth. The advocacy of our glorious High Priest is inseparable from the Spirit's working in us internally—the Spirit of grace and supplication. In the fullest sense, and as furnishing to us the highest encouragement, Christ is our Advocate before the throne. He takes our cause in hand, and effectually pleads it. While He owns the guilt and demerit of those for whom He pleads, He, at the same time "maintains their right and cause."\* He presents His obedience

\* "Christ was indeed our Advocate, even then when He lived on earth; but the further concession has been made to our infirmity, that He should ascend into heaven to perform the



and sufferings as the ground of their justification; and, on the footing of covenant-stipulation, He demands for them pardon and acceptance. He stands up on their behalf against accusations laid in against them from every quarter—from devils and men, and their own consciences. He defends their cause against calumnies, revilings, and reproach, and all the criminations of the accuser of the brethren. It is in relation to a high judicial process that Christ's intercession for us is spoken of as His advocacy. We have to do with God as a sin-offended Judge; and, considering how guilty and defiled we are, we have continual need to pray, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."\* But, because of Christ's obedience to the law, and His enduring of the full penalty in our stead, He can claim and obtain our acquittal. When He can say nothing *good of us* in ourselves, He can, on the ground of His merits, say much *for us*. Our Advocate is not a mere suppliant, nor is His plea one only of mercy. He is "*Christ the righteous*," in contrast with our being guilty and sinful. The "everlasting righteousness" which He brings in for us has been fully accepted of the Father. Therefore all claims of justice have been fully satisfied, and all charges against God's children are vain.

Finally, the intercession of our High Priest in heaven is the *oblation of His people's persons* and

office of a patron."—*Calvin*. "He abides in the most holy place above, and He is constantly occupied with the spiritual concerns of His people. He performs the part of their Defender. He appears before the Judge on our behalf; He pleads the merits of His own sacrificial death."—*Lindsay*.

\* Psalm cxliii. 2.



services for acceptance with God. As the shew-bread, consisting of twelve loaves, continually renewed and fresh, which was laid on the golden table, perfumed with frankincense, represented the whole people of Israel, so the High Priest of the Covenant ever presents the persons of His people before God. Guilty and polluted in themselves, and their best services defiled, they are unworthy to stand in the Divine presence; and regarded in themselves, they can only meet with rejection and condemnation. But when Christ appears on their behalf, and as He intermingles the fragrant incense of His obedience unto death with their services, they become a sweet savour unto God, and their works are acceptable in His sight. In consequence of His constant intercession, the Lord sees "no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." Of the church yet imperfectly sanctified, the Beloved, her Bridegroom and Head, can say, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." Even in heaven the church is presented to God "a glorious church;" and hereafter, when her sanctification is complete, she will appear visibly in the full beauty of holiness, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be without blemish." As sinners are subdued by the rod of Jehovah's strength sent out of Zion, and have by the Spirit imparted as the fruit of the Saviour's intercession, they come to Him "a willing people" in the "day of His power," and they appear, not as they once were, or are seen by themselves, marred and defiled, "but in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning," and having "the dew of their youth." Thus weighty and all-important are the acts of our Advocate and Intercessor as He appears for us in the presence of

God. Thus inestimable are the blessings which He procures and confers, as He obtains for our persons and services full acceptance and favour with the High and Holy One, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and whose angels are charged with folly !

## CHAPTER IV.

### PRE-EMINENT QUALIFICATIONS OF CHRIST AS AN INTERCESSOR AND ADVOCATE—PROPERTIES OF HIS INTERCESSION.

AMONG men, and in human affairs, it is ever deemed important that an intercessor with a superior, from whom a benefit is sought, should be so qualified as to afford a reasonable prospect of his success. All care is taken to select a suitable advocate to whom the management of momentous interests is intrusted. The pre-eminent fitness of Christ Jesus to be His people's Intercessor and Advocate is seen in His personal and official qualifications; and the properties of His intercession, as He continually carries it on, entitle Him to the fullest confidence of His people.

1. HE IS THE ONE ONLY INTERCESSOR AND ADVOCATE FOR SINNERS BEFORE GOD. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."\* None in the rank of mere creatures may intermeddle in this high office—none is adequate to perform its functions, or to effect its important ends. Saints in heaven cannot possibly intercede for sinners on earth, as they are ignorant of their condition and circumstances, and have no merits that are available to procure benefits for others. Nor can holy angels act as intercessors for them. These are in

\* 1 Timothy ii. 5.

the highest sense only “ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation.”\* Their ministry respects the preservation and safety of the saints, and is never represented in Holy Scripture as employed either in receiving prayers addressed to them, or in presenting to God the prayers that ascend from earth.† Although the Holy Spirit is said in one passage to “make intercession for the saints, according to the will of God,” and to “make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered,”‡ yet this interferes not with the sole and exclusive intercession of our High Priest in heaven. The work of the Spirit as an intercessor is to the saints on earth and *inward*. He intermeddles not with the work of the High Priest above, but operates on the hearts and minds of the saints. He takes the things of Christ and shows them to us; and, as “the Spirit of grace and supplication,” He stirs up to prayer and holy effort. In the language of *Augustine*—“He intercedes by His influence upon us, and by leading us to aspirations which language cannot express.” The distinction between the internal work of the Spirit and the intercession of the Mediator in heaven is aptly stated by *Dr. Chalmers*—“The Saviour inter-

\* Hebrews i. 14.

† Romanists, in pleading for angel-worship and angel-intercession, make a distinction between *mediators of redemption* and *mediators of intercession*, ascribing the former to the Redeemer alone, and the latter to holy angels. It is sufficient to say that such a distinction is wholly unknown to Holy Scripture. Christ Jesus is ever represented as the only Intercessor for sinners to God—the sole Advocate of His people, and angels are nowhere exhibited as sustaining such relations, or as engaged in these offices.

‡ Romans viii. 26, 27.

cedes for us in heaven; the Spirit intercedes for us in our own heart. The one intercession is pure and altogether unmixed with the dross of earthliness; the other passes through a corrupt medium, and finds its way among the adverse impediments of an earthly nature; and, by the time that it cometh forth in expression, has had to encounter the elements of darkness and carnality that are within us. On all grounds, the most stable and lasting, Christ Jesus sustains the character of being the sole Intercessor and Advocate in heaven of His people. He has the power of asking, as the only-begotten Son of the Father (Psalm ii. 8). Intercession is founded on propitiation. He therefore who is the sole Propitiation, is the only Intercessor. To Him belongs exclusively the honour of sitting at the right hand of the Father, as a Priest upon His throne; and in this high position He is fitted to manage the work of prevailing advocacy. As by His passion He is the sole Author of eternal redemption, so is He the sole Finisher of it in the way of application by His continual intercession.”\*

2. As an Intercessor and Advocate, Christ Jesus is *pure and spotless*. “Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” Moral integrity is a necessary qualification of a human advocate, in order that he may be intrusted with matters of importance, and full confidence may be reposed in him. He who enters into the holiest of all, and whose business it is to present a pure offering to the Lord of hosts, requires to be absolutely free from all impurity. Accordingly,

\* “Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans,” by Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D., vol. ii., p. 84.



He is said, in relation to His life in heaven, to "be holy, harmless, and undefiled." He was "separate from sinners," as He contracted, from intercourse with them, no moral stain; as He cannot have the least fellowship with them in sin, while, at the same time, He has sympathy and compassion towards them in their trials and miseries. As in His obedience and death the Saviour had no sin of His own to suffer for, so in His glorified state He has no personal transgression for which He needs to solicit pardon and cleansing. The spotless purity of His person, as well as the righteousness of His cause, secures the efficiency of His intercession. As the ancient altar of incense was "overlaid" round about with pure gold, so the intercession of Christ, which it foreshadowed, is valuable and pure like "gold of the seventh refining."\*

3. He is *wise, skilful, and faithful* as an Intercessor. Possessed of omniscience, our Advocate in heaven perfectly knows His people, with all their conditions and circumstances, and all that affects their interests of every kind. He is infinitely wise, knowing how to employ the most suitable means to meet their diversified cases, and to effect His designed purposes of love and mercy towards them. A wise human advocate will not take a suit in hand if he has not good ground to hope that he can bring it to a successful issue, and his skill is seen in his guiding matters so as to accomplish the desired end. Our Lord, in whom are "hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge," manages with inscrutable wisdom the cause of His people which He undertook, as "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertain-

\* Hebrews ix. 9. Exodus xxxvii. 26.

ing to God," and to the interests of His people. He performs most perfectly whatever He undertook as a Surety, and fulfils all His promises in relation to their deliverance and salvation. Resting on His intercession before the throne, we may be assured that the resources of inscrutable wisdom will ever be available for procuring whatever He asks for us—whatever is suitable to supply our need. Prayers innumerable, by all sorts of persons, on all subjects, have been put into His censer, and they never have been unperfumed with the incense of His merits, nor refused and returned unanswered. He knows how to give effect to every separate petition; and as He fulfils His promises in answering prayer, His people know His "faithfulness" to be their "shield and buckler" around them.

4. He is endowed with all *authority* and *power* in *heaven* and *earth*. He demands as His proper right what He asks; and His is almighty power to control and remove all that would impede the bestowal of the supplicated blessing. He has a commission and command from the Father to intercede for His saints. As a "*Priest upon His throne*," He pleads from the high seat of sovereign power. From the day of His solemn inauguration, when He was declared to be the only-begotten Son of God, He was commanded to "ask," and there was promised Him, as the appropriate answer, universal dominion.\* The "commandment which He received of the Father," called the Mediator to suffer and die, and for this end *a body was prepared for Him*. In like manner He has a command to be an *Advocate* for the application of redemption, and therefore life is given Him

\* Psalm ii. 8.

in glory and a throne in heaven, that He may plead perpetually, and that nothing suitable for His people may be withheld, "whatever His lips would crave." How firm and stable is the hope founded on the authoritative character of our Lord's intercession in heaven! His is the exclusive right to plead before the throne. He was commissioned to this office from the beginning, and had the command of the Father to discharge its appropriate functions. The obligation of the Mediator to intercede is of equal weight as that which was laid upon Him to suffer. In virtue of one part of His priestly office, performed in obedience to the Divine command, He can now put away sin for ever; in consequence of the other, the prayers of the saints which He presents have prevalency at the throne, and are answered by glorious manifestations of Divine power, and with showers of blessing.

5. Our Advocate and Intercessor *is full of compassion*. It was essential to the character and the exercise of the functions of the ancient high priest that he "should have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Although our great High Priest is completely free from all sinful infirmity, yet, as partaking of human nature, He has the tenderest sympathy with all our weaknesses, of whatever sort, as He has an ever active disposition to help and relieve them. In His priestly office His faithfulness to God is conjoined with His compassion towards us. "That He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." \*

\* Hebrews ii. 17.

This implies that if He be not tender to believers in their trials and misery, He would not be faithful to God in the exercise of His office. Infinite in mercy and full of compassion, as God, the afflictions and sufferings which He endured as man, fitted Him for the exercise of all tender pity for the trials and distresses of His people. He was on earth the "man of sorrows," that He might ever be a compassionate Saviour. In heaven, as He reflects on His humbled, tried condition in this world, He can plead the cause of His afflicted people with the tenderest, most sympathetic feeling. The sicknesses and griefs of His people while He was on earth, He remembers as ever present with Him in glory. All the afflictions that were laid upon Him during His earthly life tended the more to dispose His heart to tender and perpetual sympathy with His people in their sufferings and sorrows. With a deep and all-comprehensive sense of His people's whole condition of want and weakness, suffering and sorrow, He prayed for them in His great priestly prayer on earth (John xvii.) He has a brother's nature and a brother's heart still, while He sits upon the throne of universe. The glory of heaven has in no wise changed His judgment and affections. He has the same human will in heaven that He had on earth, and therefore the same human compassions blended with Divine pity.\* Our greatest encouragement,

\* Charnock beautifully remarks, "Our Advocate was framed in the same mould with us, in regard of His nature, and was cast into the same furnace of wrath, which we had merited; and thus knowing the miseries of men, not by a bare report, but by experience of the heaviness of the burden, is most careful to solicit the liberty and absolution of every comer to



when in weakness and trial and suffering we betake ourselves to the intercession of the Saviour, is, that His heart is full of tender sympathy, and with Him is overflowing compassion.

6. The Intercessor before the throne, our Advocate on high, is ever *ready and diligent*, while He is *most earnest* in His pleading. He is constantly at hand when the case of His people is presented for hearing—sitting always with the Father as a priest upon the throne. He “*stands*” in token of His active concern in the cause of His servants, whether it is brought before human tribunals, or into the court of heaven; while “*He sits*” in the position of a prince and a judge. Never have we reason to fear that our case is out of the mind of our exalted Intercessor, or that, when we approach the throne of grace in our time of need, He will be found absent. When our great High Priest had “passed through the heavens” in His session at the right hand of God, He is engaged in the perpetual execution of His office. He intercedes by night and by day, and His hands, lifted up to plead, never hang down. He is ready to receive and welcome comers at all times; and their true time of need is always to Him seasonable. He “can no more be sleepy than He can be cruel; no more cease to be diligent than He can be bereaved of His compassion.” He may be

God by Him, from the sentence that hangs over them; and the greater their miseries are the more are His compassions exercised. . . . He is a compassionate Intercessor, because He was a great sufferer, as compassionate to us as He is valuable with God. His merit for us is not greater than His pity to us.”—“Discourse on Christ’s Intercession,” Charnock’s Works, Puritan Divines, vol. v., p. 106.



fully depended upon to prosecute the suit that He has taken in hand to a successful issue. The advocacy which He undertook He engaged in with His whole heart; and thus He perpetually carries it on. The prayer of our High Priest recorded in John xvii. is throughout a specimen of His earnest pleading for His people in heaven. When He prayed for Himself in His last agony it was in humble submission to the Father's will, "Not my will, but Thine be done." But when He prays for His people's sanctification and final glorification, He says (John xvii. 24), "Father, I will," He uses more the language of a Judge than of an Advocate. It is the expression of sovereign authority and dominion rather than that of a plea for blessing. As the names of the tribes of Israel were upon Aaron's breastplate when he stood before the mercy-seat, so the cases of the saints are "near Christ's heart when His face is turned towards them, and equally near His heart, too, when, in desertion, His back is turned upon them." The censer full of burning coals taken from the altar,\* was emblematical of the fervency of the affections of Christ, when, with much incense, He presents His people's prayers before the throne. As "the fire was never to go out" on God's altar, and the Lord ever answers by fire, thus, with all the ardour of glowing love and zeal, our blessed Advocate pleads the cause of His saints, and obtains for them answers of peace.

Finally, Christ Jesus is an *acceptable Advocate*, and His intercession is *well-pleasing* to the Father. Notwithstanding the weakness and unworthiness of those for whom Christ makes intercession, there is

\* Leviticus xvi. 12, 13.

everything in His person, and in the work in which He is engaged, calculated to secure for them acceptance. His eternal Godhead gives the like value and efficacy to His intercession in heaven, as it did to His obedience and sufferings on earth. He is the well-beloved Son of the Father, in whom He is ever well pleased. His work of atonement, which is the foundation of His advocacy in heaven, propitiated the Divine wrath, and made it befitting in Him to receive sinners into favour and friendship. Christ Jesus is the chief *favourite* in the court of heaven, and who has taken in hand to plead His people's cause. He is acceptable to the sovereign Judge in His person, in His perpetual office, and in the suit which He presents. As Jehovah is represented as smelling "a savour of rest" in the sacrifices which were offered upon His altar, so Christ "gave Himself for us a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."† The perpetual memorial of this sacrifice which is made in the work of our High Priest in heaven perfumes the holy of holies, and its fragrance remains for ever. Acting as His people's representative at the right hand of God, the acceptance accorded to Him is for the whole number of the redeemed, and for each individual saint. They are accepted in their persons and services in the Beloved, and this acceptance can never be revoked. It extends to all their interests in life and death, securing for them perpetual access to God's gracious presence, answers to their prayers, and the enjoyment of blessings manifold and unspeakably precious.

With such an Intercessor constantly standing

\* Eph. v. 1.

before the throne to plead, have we not the greatest encouragement to entrust all our case to His hands? What may we not expect of deliverance and blessing as the fruit of His earnest, compassionate, and acceptable intercession?

## CHAPTER V.

### MATTER OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION—THOSE FOR WHOM HE PLEADS.

BEFORE considering the subjects about which Christ makes intercession in heaven, it is proper to notice *the persons* whose cases He takes in hand to manage as an Advocate with the Father.

These are distinctly mentioned by a variety of expressions in Scripture descriptive of character and condition. They are "*transgressors*," persons not of the world, but given to Christ; the "*elect*"—"saints," those who "come unto God by Christ." These terms, when duly considered, and explained according to the analogy of faith, show that the intercession of Christ is of *limited* and not *universal* extent. Some *Lutheran* divines who have written on the subject maintain that the Saviour's intercession may be distinguished into *general* as offered for all men, and *special*, on behalf of the church of the redeemed. The evidence for such a distinction adduced from Scripture is, however, of the most meagre kind. All the passages referred to, such as Luke xxiii. 34, Luke xiii. 8, 9, being, from their connection, susceptible of a quite different application.

It is noteworthy that of Arminians and others who maintain the doctrine of universal redemption, very few, if any, teach that Christ intercedes for all men. The testimony of sacred Scripture is so explicit on this point that though their system would

naturally lead to this, they have hesitated to maintain openly a doctrine which would give Christ the lie, or would plainly contradict what He has declared.

1. In a certain sense it is to be admitted that the intercession of the Redeemer has reference to others who are not His saints, or of the visible church on earth. As the reward of His finished work of atonement, the world and all its concerns are under the mediatorial dominion of the ascended Redeemer. The government of the universe is upon His shoulders; and He conducts the whole administration for the advancement of the glory of Godhead and the good of His church. He is "Head over all things to His church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."\* As He sits "a priest upon His throne," and performs priestly acts, while He conducts the Divine government, He may be regarded as asking for the world's preservation, for the employment and success of the means for its conversion, for the control and restraint of evil persons and influences, and the ultimate subjugation of all things to His sceptre of righteousness. Sitting on the Father's right hand, He "waits," in pleading and expectation, till all enemies, His own and His people's, become His footstool.† When He prayed for His murderers as they nailed Him to the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," this had special regard to their future conversion; for among the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, there were those who actually crucified and slew the Prince of Life. In the parable of the barren fig tree, if the petition

\* Ephesians i. 22, 23.

† Psalm cx. 1.



of the vine-dresser is taken as representing Christ's intercession, then this has respect only to the means leading to the salvation and safety of His chosen people. The bringing out of Divine forbearance towards the Jewish church and nation was necessary for the safety of those of the seed of Abraham who were not yet called. When our Lord is represented as in any way interceding for the world, or about parties in it who are yet unconverted, the chief and ultimate object of such prayers is always the flock given Him, into which are to be gathered "other sheep" not yet called. He asks what He commands, when He says, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it;" and as He obtains whatever He craves, individuals, families, and civil communities are spared, in the long-suffering of God, for the sake of their offspring and descendants, to be in future "reckoned for a generation," and a seed of blessing on the earth. The intercession for the elect is offered for them while unborn and yet uncalled; and embraces the ordering of all providential arrangements, the provision of means of grace, and the blessing upon them for the accomplishment of the designed purpose. Thus the intercession of the Mediator for the world is not offered directly for blessings which they do not receive, but has respect to the mediatory ordering and rule in providence whereby all the inheritance of the covenant comes to the heirs of the promise.

2. In a strict and proper sense, Christ's intercession is made only on behalf of those who are given Him in the covenant, and whom He will bring at length to be with Him, that they may behold His glory. He Himself declares in the plainest terms, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them

which Thou hast given me, for they are Thine."\* The words are emphatic, and most significant. His pleading is not as a *suppliant*, but as a *claimant*, having right and authority. The original word employed does not mean to *entreat as a suppliant*, but to *ask face to face as a friend*; and the class for whom He intercedes is represented as separate and distinguished from others. He, the great and good Shepherd, Jehovah's fellow, "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," asks *concerning* His flock.† They were given Him—He laid down His life for them, and they are exclusively the subjects of His intercession. That the advocacy of the Redeemer is limited to those whom He saves, is evident from various considerations. The covenant in which they were chosen and given to the Mediator secures their final salvation; and this can only be effected by the application of the purchased redemption, through the sacerdotal and regal works of the Redeemer in glory. His office, as the High Priest of our profession, requires that He should intercede only for those for whom He was consecrated, and who accept of Him as their only Priest. Like as Aaron bore in the pectoral of judgment over his heart only the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, so Christ pleads only for the true spiritual Israel whom He carries in His heart and on His shoulders, when He appears for them in the holiest of all. The objects of Christ's atonement and of His intercession are co-extensive. He is an Advocate for those, and for those only, for whose sins He is the propitiation.‡ And the constant efficacy

\* John xvii. 9.

† So is the proper rendering of the Greek proposition.

‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2

of His intercession, of which the Scriptures assure us, shows that it is limited to those whom He saves with an everlasting salvation. All for whom He paid the ransom of His blood are freed from condemnation. The Father is well pleased with the Surety and His work. "Him He heareth always." He "loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand."\* If He died or interceded for all, all would without fail be saved. But the testimony of Scripture on this subject is explicit, and incapable of being misunderstood. He laid down His life for the sheep; their salvation is secured and perfected through the priestly life of Christ in heaven.

3. The intercession of Christ for His people is, first of all, for His *ministers* and for all *that believe* in Him through the gospel. In the great intercessory prayer of the High Priest of the Church, after praying for Himself, that He might be glorified, in order that He might glorify the Father, He next pleads for His apostles and all His future ministers, asking for them the blessings which they greatly need, and enforcing His petitions with the most weighty and affecting pleas. Their spiritual illumination, preservation through His name, their sanctification through the truth, their union to the living Head and to one another in faith and love; the conversion of the world by the truth which they preach and by the power of their example, and their glorification with Him here and hereafter, are the great matter of Christ's intercession for His ministers, the heralds of His cross, the ambassadors of His crown. How eminent is the office of the Christian ministry, when it occupies the chief place in the continued interces-

\* John iii. 35.

sion of the Redeemer in glory! How high and honourable are its privileges, and how abundant the assurance that the great ends for which the ministers of Christ are called and appointed shall, without fail, be effected, as these ever enter into the earnest and prevailing pleadings of the High Priest in heaven! What powerful and constraining motives are thus furnished to the members of the church to put many prayers for ministers into the censer of the great High Priest, if they would have them kept in His name from the evil of the world, made eminently high and devoted, and rendered instruments of blessing to the church and the world!

4. Christ's advocacy is *for all believers*. The Saviour declares in His last prayer (John xvii. 20), "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Here the persons prayed for are not the world, but the universal church of the first-born; a peculiar people, become such by believing on Christ through the apostle's word. These are not those only who had embraced the faith of Christ through the personal ministry of the apostles, but those also who in all countries and ages, to the end of the world, should believe on the Son, through the inspired words of the apostles, savingly applied by the Holy Spirit. The faith that is saving rests wholly on a Divine testimony. The apostles believed Christ's word, and were His, for whom He especially prayed. Others, after their departure, in future ages, would believe the same Divine word spoken by human instruments, to whom it was entrusted, leading them to believe on the same Saviour.\* For

\* The critical editions properly read "who believe," and not "shall believe," as in the Textus Receptus of the Authorized Version.



those made a peculiar people, by believing on the Son through the apostle's word, Christ ever asks and pleads.\* For all those He seeks the bestowment of substantially the same blessings as He sought for the apostles; and for the like reasons and important ends, that they might be one, sanctified, separated, and consecrated to the service of God in heart and life, united in faith and love, that the world through the truth might be converted, by believing that the Father had sent the Son. The Saviour's intercession is continually presented for the church invisible, consisting of all who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one in Him, the Head. It embraces, at the same time, the interests of the universal visible church; those who profess faith in Him, and obedience to Him, and their children, securing its existence and extension and perpetuity, the dispensation of the means of grace, and the blessing upon the means, rendering them effectual to the heirs of salvation.

5. The intercession of our exalted High Priest is made not only for all the elect comprehensively, or for the universal church as a body, but is for *every individual believer*. In the several passages of Scripture where it is spoken of, there is much stress laid upon the Saviour's taking in hand the particular cases of

\* The original verb includes both petition and pleading. Quesnel justly remarks—"There are no Christians in any age whatever who do not owe their faith to the word of the apostles," (or John xvii. 20)—vol. iii., p. 560—"Woe to the Papists who are not ashamed to belch forth the abominable blasphemy that the Scripture contains nothing that is not ambiguous, and that consequently the tradition of the church is the sole mistress of what we are to believe. But we should remember that the Son of God, our only Judge, approves of that faith alone which is received from the teaching of the apostles."—*Calvin*.



His saints, and His pleading for them individually before the throne. They are referred to singly, and are mentioned by name. When He keeps Peter in the hour of temptation, He says, "I have prayed for *thee*, that *thy* faith fail not."\* The Good Shepherd calls His own sheep singly by name; and in consequence, He gives unto them individually eternal life—"none of them can perish, nor can any pluck them out of His hands."† The Advocate on high pleads the cause of individual saints. "If any one," even of His little children, "sins, we have an Advocate with the Father."‡ How encouraging and comforting is this view of our Lord's intercession! The weak, the unworthy, the sinful, are not excluded from a part of His priestly work in heaven. He offers up "the prayers of all saints," intermingling them continually with the incense of His mediation. He thus pleads for every saint, on every occasion and circumstance,—when weak and tempted, when wandering and falling, in all work and conflict, in life and death. He "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." The "day of small things" He despises not. He will not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." For every one that comes to God by Him—the weakest and most tried believer—He intercedes. Though he may cry long, and fear that he is not heard, He who pleads his cause must prevail, for the Father hears Him always, and is

\* Luke xxii. 32.

† John x. 27, 28.

‡ The word *man* in the Authorized Version is a supplement. The plain reference is to the "little children," the opening words of the verse, and should be rendered, "If any of these little children sins."

with Him and all His work on earth and in heaven ever well pleased. He is able and willing, and ready as He is able, to save to the uttermost, "seeing He ever liveth to make intercession." \*

6. The *Scripture marks* of those who have an interest in Christ's intercession in heaven are few, pointed, and decisive.

(1.) Those for whom our great High Priest pleads are characterized as *transgressors*, Isaiah liii. 12. "He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the *transgressors*." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly;" and for persons viewed as transgressors of His law, and in rebellion against Him, He pleads in heaven. In wondrous mercy and compassion, He did this when He was on earth, while He was despised and rejected of men, and endured embittered agony. When enemies were wantonly assailing Him, as they nailed Him to the cross, notwithstanding His vivid sense of the vileness of sin, and His intense hatred of it, He interceded for the transgressors. He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." † Amid the agonies of crucifixion, He gave effect to the supplication of the dying malefactor by His intercession, as He graciously answered it by the royal grant of an immediate entrance into paradise. Now that He has entered into His glory, and taken full possession of His mediatorial kingdom, it manifests amazing grace and condescension that He should occupy Himself in caring for transgressors still. That He should offer incessant prayer for such, is God-like. Our great High Priest has laid aside for ever His attire of humiliation; and now, when

\* Hebrews vii. 25.

† Luke xviii. 24.

He stands pleading before the throne, arrayed in His garments of glory and beauty, the names of all His people are on His jewelled pectoral, over His heart. However weak and sinful they are, His prayers on their behalf are continually offered and are all-prevalent. The deep sense of guilt and of manifold defilement should therefore deter none to come to Christ, or from putting their case into His hands. Sinners of no class or character are excluded from the active regards of Him whose prayers on earth availed for the pardon of transgressors, and whose pleadings in heaven will yet avail to deliver and bring multitudes to glory.

(2.) The intercession of the Redeemer saves to the uttermost those *who come unto God by Him*. In this brief but comprehensive phrase are fully displayed the character and frame of those who have a part in the Saviour's intercession, and it declares at the same time the certainty and fulness of their salvation. They are "comers to God," not merely by a single act, but by a habitual or continual course of action.\* They are such as come to Christ just as they are—embracing His person, trusting in His office and work, and renouncing all dependence on themselves and on any creature. The work of faith is a continual coming. Thus through Christ the Mediator, we have access by one Spirit to the Father.† Coming to God is, moreover, a scriptural expression for *religious worship* and the *way of gospel obedience*. So those who, believing in Christ, worship God in the Spirit, and yield themselves to holy

\* The original word in the participial form, "*those coming*," as in Hebrews x. 1, "Can never make *the comers* thereto perfect."

† Ephesians ii. 10.

obedience, have a constant interest in the work of the High Priest within the veil. For them He ever pleads that their faith fail not, and that it may be increased and perfected. He procures acceptance for their acts of worship; and while He works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure, He renders their services fragrant and acceptable to God. For all who thus come to God through Christ, our High Priest intercedes, and them He saves to the uttermost from the greatest sins—in extreme cases, perfectly and for ever. How powerfully should this consideration constrain us constantly to come unto God through Christ, the Mediator! How clear and full the evidence we may thus obtain that our cases are ever managed with the deepest interest by Him who stands before the mercy-seat, ever living to make intercession!

(3.) It is for *saints* and for *prayerful* ones that the intercession of Christ is continually presented. In the visions of the Apocalypse, the apostle, when in the Spirit on the Lord's-day, saw "another angel" (one of a different kind), standing at the altar, "having a golden censer; and there was given to Him much incense, that He should offer it up, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne."\* The language is figurative; and the imagery is taken from the ancient ritual of the tabernacle. The "golden altar" was symbolical of the intercession of our great High Priest, and "the incense" typified the perpetual acceptableness of His offering, as He presents its memorial before God. For all *saints* He pleads, standing at the altar; for those who, in His gracious

\* Rev. viii. 3.

purpose, were chosen to be holy, though yet uncalled; for those who have been brought into a state of saintship; for saints imperfect in their conflicts and manifold trials in life and in death. While He procures acceptance for their persons, He presents their prayers especially to God, perfuming them with the fragrant incense of His mediation. Even when these prayers are weak, interrupted, and mingled with great human imperfections and defilements—when, instead of fervent words and wrestling earnestness, or the “mouth filled with arguments”—they are only broken petitions, or “groanings that cannot be uttered,” He takes these into the golden censer that is in His hand, and offers them up with much incense, covering the mercy-seat, and perfuming the sanctuary above. If we are separated to be saints, if we are following after holiness, if prayer has become the element of our life, and we are seeking in all things “to make our requests known to God by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving,” then may we cherish the assured confidence that for us the High Priest of our profession is ever pleading in the presence of God. Then may we hold fast the blessed hope that our prayers will be graciously heard and abundantly answered; and that all the precious fruits of His priestly work in heaven shall be ours in everlasting possession.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PARTICULAR MATTER OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

THE subject-matter of the Redeemer's intercession must ever be to God's people a theme of the utmost importance. It comprehends His priestly acts in heaven on their behalf, their deliverances, supports, and comforts in the present life, and their final salvation and eternal blessedness. The Scriptures, in a great number and variety of statements, make known the matters for which Christ constantly pleads on behalf of His saints, especially in the record of His prayers with and for His disciples while He was with them on earth. Chiefly in His last prayer, uttered on the eve of His agony, there are presented, in terms at once expressive and explicit, the intercessing petitions and pleas which the heavenly Advocate is constantly offering before the throne, the answers to which are so indispensably necessary to our pardon and acceptance with God—to our support and comfort and ultimate felicity.

1. Generally, the Saviour intercedes for *the whole Church of the redeemed*, and His intercession is as *extensive as His atoning death for them*. On the ancient anniversary of atonement the Aaronical high priest offered a sacrifice for the whole congregation, and when the veil was lifted up, he entered in their stead, and on their errand, into the most holy place, and on their account he sprinkled the propitiatory blood upon the mercy-seat. Their names were engraven on his breastplate and on the precious stones in the

two shoulder pieces. The Urim and Thummim, inseparable from these symbols, declared the Divine oracle in answer to the sacerdotal prayers. In like manner, our great High Priest ever represents before the throne the universal church which He has chosen and redeemed, and for it He "ever lives to make intercession." He knows His sheep in their diversified states and conditions, their interests are ever near to His heart, and He is actively engaged at all times in maintaining their right and cause. As the fruit of the diligence and industry of our exalted Advocate, the weapons formed against Zion are turned back or broken, enemies are discomfited and brought down, and enlarged blessings are enjoyed. The privileges purchased for the church by the death of the Mediator are bestowed by Him as He sits upon the throne. His satisfaction made at His death was the payment of the sinner's debt, the intercession is the plea founded on it, and, in virtue of it, those for whom it is presented will, without fail, obtain the purchased inheritance. The church is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and all things that she needs are purchased for her. What He merited for her by His obedience and death must, through His intercession, be her lot and portion. The Intercessor within the veil is ever mindful of the church's concerns. For the lowest and most tried of her members He constantly pleads; and everything that affects her interests, whether prosperous or adverse, engages His unceasing attention. He assures her that He will never forsake her—that her name is inscribed on the palms of His hands as they are employed in intercession, and that her walls are continually before Him.\*

\* Isaiah xlix. 16.

2. The intercession of Christ is eminently *for the Spirit to apply the purchased redemption*. In the counsels of the blessed Trinity from eternity, and in the covenant of grace, it was arranged that the whole applicatory part of salvation should be in the hands of the Spirit. Accordingly the Saviour, in view of His completed undertaking, asked the fulfilment of the covenant-stipulation in the mission and work of the Spirit. This was matter of special and repeated promise in His great discourse of consolation, spoken in the upper chamber in the night in which He was betrayed:—"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Again, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."\* The gift of the Spirit, which Christ as an intercessor asks, He has authority as a Priest upon His throne to send. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me."†

In the economy of grace, the Son sends the Spirit as the paraclete, to be a substitute for Himself upon earth. He is "the Spirit of truth," coming from

\* John xiv. 16, 17; xiv. 26. The Spirit is said to be sent by the Father *in Christ's name*—that is, on account of His merits, and to carry forward to completion the gracious work which He had begun.

† John xv. 26.

the bosom of the eternal Father, to reveal the secret love of His heart, and the wonders of the Divine counsels, and to carry on the testimony of the faithful and true Witness in the world. In His essential nature He proceeds from the Father and the Son; and He is sent by the Father in the name of the Son, as representing the Son, to carry forward and complete the great work of human redemption. Still, more fully and pointedly, the Saviour, towards the close of His discourse, declares that a principal end of His ascension to heaven, and of His work within the veil, was the mission of the Spirit (John xvi. 7-16). It was *necessary* for Him *to go away*, and “expedient” or *profitable for them* that the Spirit might come to do more than supply His personal presence with them, even to open up exhaustless sources of spiritual consolation and strength to their souls. “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” On the footing of His finished work on earth, He asks the Father for the mission of the Spirit; and, having obtained what His heart desires, He *sends* Him, by His sovereign authority, as a mediatorial Prince and Saviour. This is preparatory to His whole work of conviction, faith, and saving illumination. When He is come He will “reprove” and, *convince* one part of the world for their conversion, and *convict* the other, who remain unconverted, to their destruction. The Spirit was sent through Christ’s intercession to guide infallibly the apostles as inspired teachers to write and speak, without the possibility of error, all that Christ would have communicated as the gospel of His grace. He is sent, moreover, to guide Christians into the truth of Christ in their daily walk, as He guides them



in the great matters of eternal salvation. He leads them into saving acquaintance with Christ's claims and character, and with the fundamental truths of Christian faith, hope, and consolation. The Comforter's mission is pre-eminently concerned with the promotion of the Saviour's honour, and with the revelation of His love to sinners, and of His preciousness to believers as their only and all-sufficient Saviour. Verse 14—"He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The mission of the Spirit is thus held forth as the first-fruit of the Saviour's office as a King-Priest in heaven. Hence all the privileges which the Spirit confers upon the heirs of salvation, and all the works which He begins and perfects in the soul, are likewise the fruits of His continual and all-prevalent intercession. How comprehensively and emphatically is this declared by the ascended Saviour when He says, "He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you!" All that is Christ's by purchase—all that is His by plea and possession, the Spirit receives and shows it by His internal operation on His people's understandings and hearts. As the Spirit is the sum and substance of all good things which our heavenly Father knows to give to them who ask Him, the intercession of Christ, which procures this precious gift, is the great and inexhaustible source to them of all benefit and blessing. The pardon of multiplied transgressions, the healing of their natures, the casting out from the court of justice of the accusations of Satan, and the casting of them out of our consciences, support against temptations, perseverance and perfection in grace, and at last perpetual residence with Him, and full likeness to Him, are procured by our Advocate, as



all these privileges were purchased by Him as our Surety and Substitute.\*

3. More particularly, the subject-matter of the Saviour's advocacy and intercession in heaven comprehends—(1.) The communication of all *saving grace* to the *elect* in their *regeneration and justification*. When the dry bones in the valley of vision are quickened, it is in answer to the prophet's prayer, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon the slain, that they may live."† The petition was presented by the Intercessor within the veil, and the answer is given by His sending forth the Spirit of life to breathe from every quarter, causing the dry bones to live, and to "stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." In like manner, the intercession of our High Priest in heaven procures the coming of the Spirit in every instance, when dead sinners become spiritually alive; when the lost and wandering are brought nigh; when the hard and stony heart becomes a heart of flesh; when in the act of union to Christ the new creature is formed, "old things pass away, and all things become new." The conversion of the soul to God is pre-eminently the work of the Spirit, whether in the case of individuals, or in the calling and quickening of multitudes in a season of gracious and powerful revival. For this we should fervently, unitedly, and perseveringly plead. The multitudes called and savingly awakened in the days of primitive Christianity were changed by the operation of the Spirit, and the means which called this forth was the earnest, persevering prayer of disciples. After

\* See "Charnock's Discourse on Christ's Intercession," vol. ix.

† Ezekiel xxxvii. 9.

the ten days' continuous united prayer in the upper chamber, the copious descent of the Spirit at Pentecost took place ; and at subsequent times during this period of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, wonders of power, in miracles of healing and of spiritual quickening, were renewed in answer to united, wrestling prayer. " When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."\* The descent of the Spirit, and the life-giving energy which He put forth, was not the effect of human prayers, however spiritual and importunate, but was the fruit of the intercession of Christ in glory which, intermingling the prayers of saints on earth " with much incense," renders them acceptable and efficacious of the desired blessing. While the bestowment of regenerating grace is ever connected with much prayer, and we have all encouragement to pray for this object, we should chiefly look to the Spirit as the great agent of a saving change, and depend on the priestly work of the Saviour in heaven for procuring a gracious hearing of prayer, and for commanding the life-imparting influence of the Spirit in answer to it.

The *justification* of sinners before God is the fruit of the work of the Redeemer as His people's Advocate and Intercessor. Justification is a judicial act of grace, freeing the sinner from condemnation, and bringing him into a state of pardon and acceptance. It is sometimes ascribed to God as a Judge :—" It is God that justifieth," and to Christ Jesus as an Advocate, pleading the merits of His obedience and

\* Acts iv. 31.

death. The propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer is the ground of our acquittal. His advocacy and intercession are the immediate cause of our receiving pardon and acceptance. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."\* When we come to God, the Judge of all, in friendship and fellowship, we come to the blood of the Mediator, that "speaketh better things than that of Abel." The latter denounced punishment upon the murderer; the former asks pardon for the guilty and rebellious. The propitiation made by the shedding of Christ's blood is the meritorious cause of our justification; the intercession before the throne made by the same blood sprinkled is the immediate moving cause of obtaining the great blessing. "The death of Christ accepted made our justification possible; the death of Christ, pleaded by Himself as our Advocate, makes justification actual."† The application and completion of our justification are ascribed chiefly to the work of the Saviour's intercession. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."‡ Thus we are indebted to the advocacy of our High Priest in heaven for the great blessing whereby we are rescued from guilt and condemnation; whereby our transgressions are cast behind God's back, and can never afterwards appear against us in judgment—by which we have peace with God, and are taken into a league of perpetual friendship with Him. A sealed pardon, with all its gracious effects, flows from

\* Romans iv. 25.

† Charnock's Discourse on Christ's Intercession.

‡ Romans viii. 34.

this source. Hence, too, we obtain the sense of pardon. Our vast debt is fully cancelled, never to be exacted a second time; we have peace of conscience, and are made partakers of a joyful and assured hope. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."\*

(2.) *Continuance in a gracious state* depends wholly on the intercession of the High Priest in heaven. Even the child of God offends often, and in all things. He therefore needs to have recourse to the Divine Advocate continually—to Him who ever pleads on the ground of His propitiatory sacrifice, formerly offered to Divine justice on behalf of transgressors. Daily sins provoke the righteous displeasure of a reconciled Father; and if these were not purged away through the constant application of atoning blood, by the Spirit sent as the fruit of the Saviour's intercession, they would expose us to wrath, and lead to final rejection. In justification we obtain a *legal* acquittal, which is pleadable in the court of heaven, and which can never be reversed; but because of manifold provocations we need a fatherly pardon, and in our hearts the sense of forgiving mercy. This can only be obtained through the prevalence of our Advocate in heaven. When the angel of the covenant espoused the case of Joshua, the high priest, against Satan, "the accuser of the brethren," he overlooked the defilement of his sacerdotal garments, rebuked the adversary, pleaded the cause of His servant, and appointed him a position of dignity and honour.† Thus may we have confidence that, through the prevalence of Christ's advocacy, our

\* Isaiah xxxii. 17.

† Zechariah iii. 1-6.



daily transgressions will not again bring us into condemnation, the deep and manifold stains of our best services will be removed; and we have ground of rejoicing that our sins of whatever kind are completely forgiven for His name's sake. "All sin in its nature is defiling and condemnatory, and must daily accuse us before God; but the pleading of the heavenly Advocate, on the ground of His perfect accepted ransom, obtains a full acquittal, and the entire blotting out of iniquity. Purged in the hyssop, dipped in atoning blood, we become clean; washed, we become 'whiter than snow.'" (Psalm li. 7).\*

4. The advocacy and intercession of Christ protects and frees us from the *accusations of adversaries*, and furnishes *strength and victory against temptations*. The Saviour from the beginning has pleaded the cause of His servants against all accusations laid in against them from whatever quarter. He has "maintained their right and cause" against unjust judges and unrighteous tribunals; He sits on the throne in the heavens, judging right.† When on earth He stood up for His people against all enemies, protecting them from the power of evil, and confounding and silencing those who sought to slander and injure them. Satan is "the accuser of the brethren," who "accuses them day and night before God." So inveterate is his nature against Christ's people and cause,—so strong is his desire to injure and destroy them, that he will go into sacred assemblies, that he may accuse them. By rebukes of their own conscience, and through perverted public opinion, the adversary seeks to effect the rejection

\* See Charnock's Discourse.

† Psalm ix. 4.



of their persons and services, to ruin their cause, and to expose them to general ignominy and contempt. The Advocate of the saints constantly stands up to meet every accusation laid in against them. While their enemies, who seek their condemnation and ruin, are numerous and industrious, their Advocate is always in court to meet the accusation, and to foil the accuser. To some of the charges preferred against them, acting on their behalf, He pleads *guilty*, and then presents His own blood, as having been shed to atone for their guilt, and to pay fully their great debt. As the payment was accepted of the Father, the Advocate claims that Divine law and justice can have no further demand, and therefore that the accused be discharged. When, again, false accusations are laid in against the righteous, their Advocate in due time shows their falsehood, puts the accuser out of court, and "brings forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday." \* Even before the case comes in fully for hearing, the Advocate in heaven anticipates the criminations which the enemy proposes to prefer against the saints. In view of Satan's great temptation, our Lord warned His disciples, "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." While the temptation was against them all, "to have *you*," "to sift *you*," the Saviour's intercession was chiefly for Peter, who was most fiercely assailed by the tempter, and who succumbed under the trial. Of him, Christ says in particular, "I have prayed for *thee*;" or, as it is in the original, "I have made supplication, or asked with earnestness," "that thy faith fail not." †

\* Psalm xxxvii. 6.

† Luke xxii. 31, 32.

The work of our exalted Advocate at times *brings the accuser of the brethren to silence*, and puts him out of court. When He arises to plead His people's cause, He foils the adversary, rescues their names from calumny, and brings forth their judgment unto truth. His advocacy does not secure His clients against being wickedly accused and tempted, but it provides that the accusation should be repelled, and the temptation overcome. The strength obtained through the Saviour's intercession, though it does not, in some cases, hinder the temptation from being successful, yet it effectually prevents it from being wholly victorious. When Christ prayed for Peter, He did not plead against his being assailed with the temptation, but He asks that his "*faith*" should not *fail*. The plea was successful, for though Peter's faith failed as to *the act*, it was sustained in *its root and principle*. This is implied in the direction—"When thou art converted," or restored, "strengthen thy brethren." The main strength which saints have to resist the temptations of Satan, and to stand against the accusations and reproaches of an evil world, lies in their interest in the powerful intercession of their Advocate in heaven. He ever prays that they may be preserved from the evil that is in the world, or delivered when exposed to the onset. This is a sufficient support of their faith under all the assaults of the adversary. They obtain strength for the conflict, and are enabled to overcome. With every temptation there is provided "a way of escape, that they be able to bear it." They resist the devil, and he flees from them. Taking the shield of faith, they "quench the fiery darts of the wicked one." They keep the word of the Saviour's patience, and are kept from "the hour of temptation," that comes on

“the whole world to try them that dwell on the earth” (Rev. iii. 10). Believers, strengthened through the intercession of their Advocate in heaven, become more than conquerors; and instead of prevailing against them, their accuser is cast out; and the calumnies, false charges, and reproaches which he brings against the righteous are visited upon him and his instruments in the day of vengeance.

5. *The acceptance of our persons and services is through the intercession of our great High Priest.*

In themselves, saints, while here, are imperfect in all their graces; they are defiled in heart and life; and their best services are polluted. “*In all things we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*”\* “We are all an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”† How is it possible for persons so unworthy, and for works so sinful, to find acceptance with the holy Lord God? Only through the perfect sacrifice of the Mediator, and its continual presentation as a memorial in heaven. The altar of atonement sanctifies every gift that is laid upon it, however unworthy and impure. As of old, the high priest under the law, after he had offered the sacrifice for the people, filled both his hands with fragrant incense, and put it in the golden censer, with coals of fire, covering the propitiatory with the cloud of its perfume, so our blessed Intercessor mingles the prayers of His saints with much incense of His mediation, and renders them accepted.‡ Thus He does to all their other services, their praises, penitential confessions, solemn vows, and works of faith, and labours of love. Their “burnt-offerings” and other sacrifices are accepted on His

\* Rom. iii. 23.

† Isa. lxiv. 6.

‡ Rev. viii. 3.

altar.\* All the imperfection and defilement of their holy services are overlooked. Their prayers as well as services are accepted in the Beloved.† When Aaron stood to minister as Israel's representative, he had inscribed on the golden plate of the mitre on his forehead, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," for he bore "the iniquity of their holy things;" so Jesus, our High Priest, is the basis of His people's holiness, when He presents Himself on their behalf in the sanctuary on high. "It shall be always upon His forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."‡ While nothing that it is possible for us to offer can be pleasing to God, except it comes with the recommendation of our exalted Advocate, yet with this continually offered, we have no ground to fear rejection, because of personal defilement or the imperfection and sin of our services. We are surely welcome to come boldly through the sprinkled blood of Jesus to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.

6. The intercession of Christ secures the full *sanctification, perseverance, victory at death, and final salvation* of the redeemed. When Christ stands in the presence of God as the High Priest of His people's profession, the inscription, conspicuous on His forehead, intimates that He has made all adequate provision that they should be "a holy people to the Lord their God." The blood of His atoning sacrifice is a "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," to purify the redeemed of every rank from all unrighteousness. It "cleanses them from all sin." Christ's intercession is the voice of His blood

\* Isa. lvi. 7.

† Ephes. i. 6.

‡ Exod. xxviii. 38.



pleading for the renewal of the moral nature of those who were given Him by the Father. The first fruit of this intercession is the Spirit, who works *initial* sanctification, by renewing the soul after the Divine image; the continued exercise of the Saviour's advocacy effects *progressive* sanctification, and leads to "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." The holiness of the redeemed, consisting in their separation from all evil in the world, the exercise of all holy graces in heart and life, and the consecration of the whole man to the service of God, was a principal matter in the Saviour's great priestly prayer for His disciples on the eve of His agony in the garden. He sought that they might "be kept from the evil,"—that they "might be sanctified through the truth," and that at length they should be made perfect in holiness, in being fully transformed, as they are brought to the vision of His glory. His advocacy secures the ends for which His sacrifice was offered. He "gave Himself for us, that He might purify us to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."\* The Spirit, sent in answer to the intercession of the ascended Saviour, not only implants grace, and renews the nature, but He also excites grace into continual exercise, enables to mortify sin in the members, and to walk "in all manner of holy conversation." If we "set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth as a priest at the right hand of God," we mortify our members which are on the earth, and "put on the new man," which is renewed in holiness, after the image of Him that created him.† The gifts which the ascended Redeemer received from the Father

\* Titus ii. 14.

† Col. iii. 10.



He confers on "the rebellious," that the Lord God might dwell among them.\* This gradual moral transformation is effected by beholding the glory of Him who is their Advocate in heaven, as their perfection in grace will be the final issue of His advocacy for them. How precious is this to a saint struggling against corruption, and sensible of manifold transgressions of heart and life!

The saints' perseverance in grace is secured by the Saviour's continual intercession. Left either to himself, or given up to temptation, or unaided by fresh supplies of grace, the believer would fall from grace, and utterly perish. But there is ample provision made in the covenant of grace, through union to Christ the Head, and by the indwelling of the Spirit, to secure his standing in grace, and his endurance to the end. The assured word of promise is ample and all-encouraging. The inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, is "reserved in heaven" for the saints, and they are "kept by the power of God," till they come to its full possession. † "He that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it till the day of His second coming." ‡ Our Lord, when warning Peter of Satan's temptation, laid the whole stress of His perseverance upon His intercession on his behalf. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." § The secret of his recovery from falling and ultimate perseverance lay wholly here. Not on account of his faith, or because of the work of grace in him—which at best was weak and imperfect—was the apostle delivered from the power of the adversary. It was wholly owing to upholding grace communicated

\* Psalm lxxviii. 18.      † 1 Peter i. 4, 5.      ‡ Phil. i. 6.

§ Luke xxii. 32.

as the fruit of Christ's intercession. Thus, too, are the feet of all the saints preserved from falling. Thus do "the righteous hold on their way," and they are "kept by the power of God, ready to be revealed in the last time." \* If the Saviour by His propitiation procured actual admission for us into favour and friendship with God, in spite of all obstacles and enemies of our salvation, He will surely, by His prevalent intercession, maintain our access into the grace wherein we stand, despite of all enmity and opposition. The hope and confidence that we shall endure to the end rest securely on the power of our living Head, and on His perpetual intercession.

The intercession of Christ *secures for believers an unstinged and happy death*. By His atoning sacrifice He conquered death. He now reigns in glory for the purpose of bringing down all His people's enemies; and among them, "the last that shall be destroyed is death." His advocacy for His saints, as He pleads before the throne, and employs His interest with the Father, and exerts His authority on their behalf, secures for them a peaceful and triumphant death. When Stephen—the proto-martyr of the New Testament—was finishing his noble testimony, and was in view of a painful, immediate death, he looked up to heaven and "saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God." † The Saviour, whom he loved better than life, appeared in the position of an advocate on high, actively engaged on his behalf, deeply interested in the sufferings of His servant, and prepared to receive his departing spirit as it was committed to Him. In every instance, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints;" ‡—whether it

\* Job xvii. 9; 1 Pet. i. 5. † Acts vii. 56. ‡ Psa. cxvi. 16.

occurs suddenly, and they are removed in the vigour of life and from loved service, or by lingering disease, and with faculties both of mind and body impaired, He whose they are and whom they serve is present to sustain them in the last conflict, to perfect His gracious work in them, and to receive them to His rest in glory. As Israel, when the wanderings of the wilderness were ended, stood in view of the Jordan in full flood, and beheld the river divided at the lifting up of the ark of the covenant, and as the priests' feet touched the waters; so believers, by faith, see death conquered, and a safe way of entrance to heaven guaranteed through the death of Christ, and by His presence and advocacy as the ever-living and all-prevailing High Priest of their profession. The last piece of the Christian armour is "*all prayer*;" the last utterance of faith in dying—expressed by thousands of saints in all variety of circumstances, in audible words, or in the inarticulate groans and breathings of the sinking spirit—is prayer. This is taken into the censer of the angel in heaven; and as it comes with acceptance before the throne, it is immediately answered by giving peace and victory in death,—the disembodied and perfectly sanctified spirit being received to be with Christ in paradise. How precious and full of all consolation is the work of the Saviour's intercession, in the prospect of the death of the saints! to know that He whom they served and trusted in life will guide them even to death. That, like Moses on the hill-top, He will continue to hold up His hands till the going down of the sun; that His advocacy on their behalf will avail to administer to them all needed help; and that, when His last plea is offered for them, as they part

away from earth, death will be to them swallowed up in victory.

The *final complete salvation of the redeemed* is eminently owing to the intercession of the Redeemer. This, which is the great end of their election, and calling, and sanctification, is, at the same time, a chief end of His mediatorial life in glory. By His intercession, He is "able"—willing and ready—to "save to the uttermost." \* In a beautiful and cogent argument, and in terms the most expressive, the apostle ascribes the completed salvation of saints to the life of the Saviour in heaven. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." † This is His life of intercession as a Priest, and of sovereign dominion as a King. By His death, as an atoning sacrifice, He reconciles us to God; by His life as a diligent and able advocate, He carries forward and completes our salvation. The title to the saints' admission to glory, which was won by the Saviour's death, is presented by His continual intercession. This is acknowledged and accepted at the throne, and rendered available in due time, for the actual admission of each individual believer to the inheritance of the saints in light. The concluding petition of the Saviour's last prayer on earth for His people is specially for their completed salvation. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." ‡ The petitions which He had previously offered had respect to the great blessings which they needed on earth—separation from the world, preservation from the evil, sancti-

\* Hebrews vii. 25.

† Rom. v. 10.

‡ John xvii. 24.



fying grace, union in fellowship with the head and all the members. At the close, rejoicing in the final salvation of all whom He loved from eternity and died to save, and has brought near to himself, He asks that "they may be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory." This expresses the sum and highest conception of the saints' future bliss—the nearest fellowship with Christ, and the full vision and fruition of His glory. This He seeks not in an humble, servile manner, as when He pleaded on earth, but He demands in the way of sovereign authority, to indicate that without the petition being granted, the complete salvation of His saints is not reached. The desire of His heart for them, and the great end of all His intercession on their behalf, would be unsatisfied. With the utterance of this great petition our exalted Advocate ceases His pleading for the saints in relation to their admission to heaven, as it secures their highest felicity. \*

Lastly, the saints' *continuance in glory*, and the *perpetual increase of their heavenly felicity*, are secured by the Saviour's perpetual intercession.

Our Lord's official ministrations as a Priest do not cease at the end of the world, nor on the admission of the last of the redeemed to heaven. He is "a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec." "He ever liveth to make intercession." This plainly implies that even after the whole number of the saved shall have been made up, and they have reached "the end

\* It is justly observed by Charnock, Works, vol. v., p. 136—  
"Christ would be an unsuccessful Advocate, and consequently an impotent propitiation, if any believer, after all his wandering through the mire of this world, would fall short of a comfortable reception and mansion above."



of their faith,"—the perfect salvation of their souls, there is a work that is necessary still to be performed for them by the great High Priest of their profession. This is securing the permanence of their state of felicity, and the acceptance of the lofty worship which in glory they render to the heavenly King. So great and awful is the Majesty in the heavens—so bright and overpowering His glory, and so transcendent His infinite purity—that creatures, the most excellent, are not worthy to stand before Him. The "heavens are not clean in His sight, and His angels hath He charged with folly." The Seraphim, when they draw nigh to worship, veil their faces, in token of creature distance, and cover their feet, as acknowledging their holiest services to be unworthy of Divine regard and acceptance. The ancient high priest, as he entered within the veil, and afterwards came forth to bless the congregation of Israel, presided over the house of God—whether the tabernacle in the wilderness, or the magnificent temple in Jerusalem. So Christ, the one great Priest of the Covenant, takes the lead in the services of the sanctuary, whether of the church militant on earth, or triumphant in heaven. In the temple above, where the vials of prayer are supplanted by the golden harps of praise, He leads the worship of the upper sanctuary, accentuates the melody of the new song of the redeemed, and obtains acceptance for the highest kind of creature worship. The sweet incense of His mediation perfumes all the celestial services of the saints in glory; and throughout the roll of endless ages, Christ at the head of the countless host of the redeemed, will bring unspeakable "glory to God in the highest," and full and overflowing joys to His ransomed ones in heaven. The sphere of highest

felicity is a state of endless progress. Saints, perfectly purified, share happiness in different degrees, and advance continually in intuitive spiritual knowledge, and in all the elements of supreme felicity, until, in ages to come, they shall reach higher attainments than were possessed by the angelic spirits around the throne, when they first entered the mansions of glory. As mathematical curves approach continually nearer a strait central line, without the possibility of ever touching it, so the saints in heaven are ever growing in likeness to God, while yet they will never reach His absolute and essential perfection. It is within the bounds of a sanctified imagination that intelligent, holy creatures in heaven—saints from earth and angels—will, throughout eternity, be continually advancing nearer to complete likeness to God, without the possibility of ever arriving at full resemblance to infinite purity and perfection. The command—"Be ye holy, for I am holy," held out to them "the mark of the prize of their high calling," to which they eagerly pressed when on earth; and when they shall have grasped the crown of the victor at length, it will declare their obligation and privilege, and the vigour and excellency of the service in heaven, to press with loftier thoughts and more fervent aspirations, to the attainment of a yet far higher elevation of moral character, as well as to a greater measure of the felicity of which the noblest and purest natures are capable. Of this endless progression in holiness and happiness, Christ Jesus, who was given in covenant to be a "leader and commander of the people," is the Omega as He was the Alpha. The work which He began He will gloriously complete, and the headstone He will bring forth with "shoutings of, Grace, grace unto it." In the

exercise of His sacerdotal office, He secures His people's salvation as the Lamb slain—an atoning victim and ransom offered for their sins. Their high and honourable privileges in heaven will still be through Him—their perpetually living and interceding High Priest. Their services in glory will only be pleasing to God as presented by Him; and by His guidance and influence they are brought to the unfathomable and inexhaustible Source of felicity. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” \*

\* Revelation vii. 17.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PERPETUITY AND EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

THERE are two inquiries respecting the work of Christ as our Advocate in heaven which are to us most momentous and of the deepest importance. These are, 1, Is His intercession constant and perpetual? and 2, Does it prevail to obtain the blessings sought for us? Upon an affirmative answer to these inquiries must ever rest our confidence and hope of salvation; according as faith is fixed on the Scripture evidences on these points, will we have strong consolation. On both subjects the testimony of the inspired word is clear and most satisfactory.

#### PERPETUITY OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

1. The intercession of our High Priest in glory is *uninterrupted and will be carried on for ever*. Prophets and apostles equally attest this important truth, and that in the fullest and most impressive manner. "He *is*," not *was*, "a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec."\* When it is declared, "He made intercession for the transgressors,"† the expression is in the form of the *prophetic preterite*, including the future as well as the past. The prediction was given seven hundred years before the Saviour uttered His intercessory petitions in the upper chamber, and on the cross. Though spoken in the vivid pictorial

\* Psalm cx. 4.

† Isaiah liii. 12.

language of prophecy, which sees the end as if it were present from the beginning, it evidently means that the Saviour shall perpetually intercede for transgressors. The apostles, speaking of the Redeemer as being constantly employed in this work in heaven, ever use the present time. "*We have* a great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, that is passed *through* the heavens."\* "*We have*," namely, at the present time, "an Advocate with the Father."† There is now such an Advocate, actively remembering us in His thoughts, and pleading our cause with the Father. He is managing this advocacy in this age, and will in all coming ages to the end of the world, without any interruption in time, or any decline in diligence and earnestness. "He ever lives to make intercession." His oblation on earth was an offering brief and transient; but His appearance for us in heaven is continual and never ceasing. He lives in glory to be always actively engaged in discharging this part of His priestly office for us. His advocacy is like His heavenly life, without end. Everlasting love for the redeemed prompts Him to bear His people ever on His heart, and to put forth for them a ceaseless plea. Endless, inexhaustible compassion impels to endless prayer. There are many reasons most weighty why Christ's intercession should be constant and everlasting.

(1.) The *atoning death*, on which it is founded, was endured to *obtain eternal redemption*. The vicarious suffering ended when Christ died, but the virtue of His oblation has to endure for ever.

\* Hebrews iv. 4. The original compound verb is properly rendered who is "*passed through*," not *into*, as in the Authorized Version.

† 1 John ii. 1.



The intercession of the Redeemer, resting on the value of His sacrifice, is the pleading of its virtue; it is the voice of His blood, and must be unceasing and perpetual. The blood sprinkled on the ancient mercy-seat was not wiped off, but remained to be a symbolic pleading of continual favour and acceptance for Israel. The perpetual burning incense perfumed the most holy place, and its fragrance remained, so the intercession of Christ, our High Priest, which these typified, is no transient act, but remains continually in the holy place not made with hands in the heavens, procuring for all for whom it is presented perpetual acceptance and blessing.

(2.) Again, the *life of Christ in glory* is not merely the enjoyment of His personal reward; it is His *priestly life*, necessary to the completion and perfection of His priesthood. As this is declared to be an "everlasting priesthood," so He "lives for evermore," with respect to that particular function which He performs to secure His people's final salvation.\* If Christ is a Priest for evermore, His intercession, designed to effect all the high ends of His priesthood, must be perpetual and eternal.

(3.) Moreover, the high *dignity and dominion* given to the risen Saviour rests upon *His intercession for the transgressors*, equally as upon the merit of His atoning sacrifice.† The Father "divides Him a portion with the great," and He "divides the spoil with the strong," because "He bare the sin of many," and "*makes intercession*" perpetual "for the transgressors." It has been beautifully said, that when the Redeemer is enthroned in glory—the

\* Rev. i. 18.

† Isaiah liii. 12.

Head of all principality and power—"He cannot look upon His own glory," the robe which He wears, the throne on which He sits, the enemies prostrate at His feet, but He must reflect upon the reason of His present station, and be excited to redoubling His solicitations on behalf of His people."\* Unlike the ancient high priest, who entered the most holy place only once in the year, and came forth again, our Lord entered into heaven to appear in the court above, in the perpetual exercise of His function, never again to retire. He is there ever to receive His people's petitions, and obtain for them a gracious hearing. He is, as their Advocate, never out of the way to meet and silence the accusations presented against them.

4. The *diversified and innumerable cases of His people* indispensably require the uninterrupted and perpetual intercession of the heavenly Advocate; and He is in every respect adequate to plead their cause, and to bring it to a successful issue. This may be most suitably shown in the appropriate language of an able and eloquent writer:†—"He can never become languid from ignorance of His people's wants, for He is omniscient; nor from want of merit, for His sacrifice is of unfailing virtue; nor from fatigue, for He is the Almighty and immutable God." . . . "Nothing can ever occasion a suspension of His intercession. A moment's intermission would prove fatal to the eternal interests of all the elect. But while attending to the case of one, He has no need to suspend attention to that of another.

\* Charnock's Works, vol. iv.

† Dr. William Synington, on "The Intercession of Christ," p. 389.

Innumerable as are His applicants, He attends to the wants of each as if there were not another that needed His care. Multiplicity cannot bewilder, variety cannot divide, importance cannot oppress His thoughts. To Him the care of millions is no burden. Ten thousand claims meet with the same attention as if they were but one. His understanding, His love, His merit, His power, are all infinite; and we must beware of measuring Him by the low standard of our limited capacities. Nor can His intercession ever come to an end. There will be need for it for ever. So long as His people sin, He will plead for pardon; so long as they are tempted, He will procure them strength to resist; so long as they continue to perform services, He will continue to give them acceptance; so long as they are in the wilderness, He will procure them guidance and safety; nay, so long as the blessings of heaven are enjoyed, will He plead His merits as the ground on which they are bestowed. Throughout eternity will He continue to plead on behalf of His people. Never shall they cease to be the objects of His care; never shall their names be erased from His heart; never shall their cause be taken from His lips; never shall the odour-breathing censer drop from His hand, nor shall His blessed merits ever cease to rise up in a cloud of fragrant incense before the Lord. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

#### EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

The prevalence or efficacy of the Saviour's intercession is matter of the strongest trust and most animating hope to God's people. In human affairs a case of the deepest interest and most momentous

importance may miscarry, either through the incompetence of the advocate to present it aright, or from his inability to make the desired impression on the mind of the judge. Were there any ground to fear such failure on the part of our Advocate in heaven, then might we conclude that it were needless to entrust our petitions to His hands, or to hope that our suits would reach a successful issue. Instead of this, there is the strongest ground to conclude that no "cause entrusted to Him shall ever be rejected—that no petition presented in His name shall be denied. On the contrary, there is evidence most abundant and satisfactory that whatever the Saviour takes in hand to offer for His people will not only be favourably received, but that the gift bestowed in answer to prayer will greatly transcend in value and measure what was asked." "Him the Father heareth always, and with Him He is ever well-pleased." Therefore we may fully confide that when He takes in hand to plead our cause, His plea will in every case prevail for obtaining the blessing sought. The testimony of Holy Scripture on this topic is full, diversified, and most satisfactory.

The types and prophecies that went before, referring to the priestly work of Christ, clearly showed the efficacy of His intercession. The high priest, when he entered within the uplifted veil and approached the mercy-seat, was heard in behalf of the whole congregation. When he sprinkled the blood and pleaded for them, he received the blessing for them in answer to prayer, which he imparted, as he lifted up his hands and blessed them in the name of the Lord. As Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, prevailed, so Christ Jesus, when He intercedes for His people in



heaven, as a Prince, has power with God, and prevails.\* Numerous prophecies declared the efficacy of the Saviour's intercession. Of Him, as His people's Advocate on high, it is declared—"Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not withheld the request of his lips."† And again, ver. 4—"He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it Him; even length of days for ever and ever." The command addressed to the Son, accompanied with the promise, assures us of the prevalence of His plea. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."‡ His devotedness to His work as an Intercessor for the church secures the certain fulfilment of His purpose. "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."§ And when, as a compassionate and sympathising High Priest, He breaks not the bruised reed, and does not quench the smoking flax, "He brings forth judgment unto truth." "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."||

The Saviour's prayers on earth for the manifestation of God's glory, and for His people's good, were in no instance turned back unanswered. At the sepulchre of Lazarus He appealed to the Father—"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me; and I know that Thou hearest me always" ¶—implying not only

\* Genesis xxxii. 28. † Psalm xxi. 2. ‡ Psalm ii. 8.

§ Isaiah lxii. 1. || Isaiah xlii. 3, 4.

¶ John xi. 41, 42.



that the Father heard His petitions, but that He granted Him all that He asked. If thus the supplications of the Mediator were accepted in the days of His humiliation, how much more will His intercession in His glorified state in heaven prevail! We read of only one petition that He presented in His lowest abasement which was refused. This was the prayer of His embittered agony, when He cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me;" but this was for Himself, and was the voice of His shrinking humanity; and even this He asked conditionally, and not absolutely. He sought that "the cup" of suffering might pass away, were it in accordance with the Divine purpose, and for the advancement of the Divine glory; and He received it with entire resignation, when it was seen to be otherwise—"Not my will, but Thine be done." But when this one solitary petition for Himself was denied, and was indeed withdrawn, there is no record of a single petition offered for His people ever being returned unanswered. In heaven He intercedes, not as man, but as Mediator; and not only the stipulations of the covenant, but likewise His official dignity and authority, secure it that all His pleadings before the throne should be successful.

The efficacy of the Saviour's intercession is evident from many considerations, each of which is fitted to inspire the firmest confidence and the strongest hopes and consolations. He is *Jehovah's "Fellow,"* God equal with the Father. The "*fulness of the Godhead bodily*" ever dwells in Him; and as being one with the Father, what He asks cannot possibly be refused. His Divine nature was the altar on which He offered His one great sacrifice, and rendered it of infinite value; so also it imparts all efficacy to His inter-

cession. This being the presentation of the memorial of a sacrifice already accepted, and the work of a Divine person, is as perfect as His atoning sufferings were meritorious.

Our Advocate in heaven, moreover, *stands in the most intimate relation to Him with whom He intercedes*; and this is fitted to secure the prevalence of His plea. He is God's well-beloved, "only-begotten Son." Our great High Priest, who for us "has passed through the heavens," is "Jesus, the Son of God."\* Upon this relation rests His consecration to His eternal priesthood. "The word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."† What a full provision for the perpetual efficacy of Christ's intercession is made by this near and blessed relation! The eternal Father ever regards with infinite and inconceivable affection His Son, who lay in His bosom from all everlasting. He laid our help upon this Mighty One, and appointed as our Advocate Him on whom the unchangeable love of His heart rests in its unfathomable fulness. How is it then possible that aught that the Son takes in hand to ask the Father can be refused Him? If the only son of an earthly prince, becoming the advocate of a condemned criminal, prevails to obtain reversal of his sentence, how much more will the Son of God prevail to obtain for His saints whatever His heart desires! If aught was denied Him, this would indicate a change or diminution of that affection, which, as being Divine, must be unchangeable and everlasting.‡

\* Heb. iv. 14.

† Heb. vii. 28.

‡ When Themistocles went an exile from Athens, he went in his wanderings to the court of Admetus, King of Beotia,

Again, *His finished work on earth*—promoting Jehovah's glory to the utmost—advances the highest claim that His intercession for His people should be efficacious and ever-prevalent. The Saviour by His death glorified the Father. He fulfilled all His will, displayed in the brightest and most attractive lustre all His perfections, and manifested with overpowering splendour the principles of His moral government. Among the Saviour's last petitions, before He entered on His agony in the garden, was this—"Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee."\* A chief part of the glorification which the Redeemer sought for Himself, with the view of thereby bringing a revenue of honour to the Father, was to lie in His intercession for His people. With regard to the petitions which He presents in heaven, He gives the assurance—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.† We have thus presented in the clearest light those great truths—each of the highest importance, and so intimately connected are they with the one blessed end, that the one infallibly leads to the other. Christ's death is an eminent way of bringing the highest glory to

with whom he had formerly fought in deadly warfare. As he entered the palace, the beloved son of the king was playing in the court. Having taken up in his arms the prince, and fondled him, the child became speedily attached to him. Themistocles then clasping him to his bosom advanced into the presence of the monarch and knelt before him, who forgave him, and received him into favour, for the sake of the son whom he loved. How much stronger ground have those to expect forgiveness and acceptance with God who venture into His presence, embracing and holding in the arms of faith His well-beloved Son?

\* John xvii. 1.

† John xiv. 13.

God ; the prayers of the saints seek the same end ; and the intercession of the Redeemer, which gives efficacy to these prayers, fully secures this blessed result. If, then, the grand purpose of the everlasting covenant is accomplished, and the great and chief design of the obedience and death of the Son is effected, it must needs be that His intercession for the saints should be efficacious. The glory that redounds to the Father by the substitutionary work of the Son, and the honour that is given to God by the hearing and answering of the prayers of the saints, are secured by the perpetual intercession of the Saviour in heaven, which, in order to effect this great end, must be all-prevalent. The blood of Christ once shed for sin must have perpetual efficacy, for the end for which it was shed ; and this it can only have through the prevalency of the pleas of the Advocate in glory. There is a necessary connection between the perfection of the sacrifice on the cross and the prevalency of the intercession in heaven. Having glorified all God's perfections by His obedience unto death, He has only to ask, and all good shall be conferred upon them who believe in Him.

Again, the *objects* for whom the heavenly Advocate pleads render it certain that His advocacy cannot in a single instance be unavailing. They are the *elect*—His friends—brethren, dear to the heart of Him with whom He pleads—the special gift of the Father to Christ. For them Christ prays, and not for the world. He intimates in the terms used how readily His prayer for them will be granted. The original words here and elsewhere \* strongly imply

\* John xvii. 9, 23.



that the Father is disposed to grant to the redeemed whatever is asked for the saints. Instead of representing that it needs any pressing solicitation, or denying that He will intercede for them continually, He rather declares that this will be His perpetual work, and that there is the strongest ground of hope that His work will be successful. "When the love of the Father to the Advocate and His clients is so inseparably connected, what a glorious success may be anticipated from such intercession!"

Furthermore, the *character* of the Advocate's pleas is such that they must prevail with God. They are in the fullest sense holy. Our Advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous." His intercession is holy, as is His nature. When our prayers are of themselves defiled, they are, notwithstanding, accepted because of the purity of the Intercessor, and because there is immaculate holiness in the whole spirit and ends of His intercession. Again, they are the pleas of His merit. The stipulations of the covenant, the truth of the promise, the righteousness of God, guarantee to Him whatsoever He demands, on the ground of His finished work. In raising the Surety from the dead, the eternal Father gave His high approval of His obedience unto the death, and thus admitted His claim to obtain all that He demands. God can never be unjust to withhold blessings which have been purchased by the price of an infinitely precious and accepted ransom. Then, whatever our Advocate pleads for is in full accordance with the will of the Father. When on earth, He resigned Himself wholly to the Father's will. He came to do not His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. He did nothing but what He saw the Father do; so is it still in heaven. He intercedes for nothing



but what the Father wills. In the whole matter of human redemption, the Father and the Son have but one will ; so that in regard to the persons for whom He pleads, and the blessings He desires for them, He asks for nothing but what is accordant with the will of God.\* The Spirit's intercession within the hearts of believers is represented as all-prevalent, because "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."† On the same ground, the intercession of the Saviour in heaven must ever prevail to obtain for the saints the blessings desired.

Finally, the precious *results* of Christ's intercession afford ample security that it will ever be efficacious for the future. In all past ages of the world, since the first revelation of mercy, the interposal of the Mediator availed to suspend the execution of vengeance upon the ungodly, and to save those who believed on the Mediator promised. As He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," so He was an Advocate, pleading from the beginning. Before His coming in the flesh, He interceded as a *promiser* ; since His advent He intercedes as a *performer*. Believers of old were saved on the credit of the work of the Surety, to be accomplished in due time : they are now saved on the ground of that work having been fully performed, and ever presented as a memorial before God. The abundant effusion of the Spirit, after the ascension of the Saviour to heaven, was a public and full testimony of the prevalence of His intercession. It was, besides, a Divine assurance that the Spirit would afterwards come to dwell in the hearts of believers, and to work in them all

\* John xvii. 8, 9 ; vi. 39 ; xiv. 13.

† Romans viii. 27.

gracious operations. The plentiful first fruits given on the day of Pentecost, in the opening of the Christian dispensation, were the earnest and assurance of a wide-spread harvest of blessings, to last till the Saviour's second coming, containing all blessing for time and eternity. Since the intercession of Christ has already been so efficacious as to procure for God's people the grand gift of the Spirit, comprehending all "good things," we cannot doubt that aught will be denied to the solicitation of Him whose first request has been so successful. The actual realised effects of Christ's intercession have been seen in multitudes converted, in innumerable sins forgiven, in saints delivered from numerous and strong temptations, in the church preserved and revived, in good works performed and accepted, and in many sons brought to glory. In the view of all this, there is surely no ground of distrust that prayers offered for the conversion of sinners, and for the prosperity of Christ's cause in the earth, will be unanswered, or that the supplications of timid, tried believers for themselves and others will prove unsuccessful.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INTERCESSION OF SAINTS AS TAUGHT AND PRACTISED BY THE CHURCH OF ROME.

THE Church of Rome shows itself to be Antichrist, not only by denying and opposing the doctrine of Christ, but likewise by exalting creatures to the offices which are peculiarly His, and by ascribing that worship and homage unto them that belong to Him alone. It is thus justly chargeable with idolatry; and in the unwarranted assumptions by which such worship is commended and enjoined, and in the observance of rites not commanded in the Word, and excessive scruples in relation to them, it is properly chargeable with superstition.

The invocation and worship of departed saints, who are assumed to be in heaven, form a distinct part of the Romish profession, against which all true Protestants are called ever to maintain a loud and faithful protest, as being wholly unscriptural, derogatory to the work and honour of Christ, and most dangerous to the moral character, peace, and salvation of men. We notice this subject chiefly in reference to the official work of Christ Jesus, our great High Priest, as the Mediator and Intercessor for His people in heaven. Instead of regarding Him, according to the representation of Holy Scrip-

ture, as the one Mediator and Advocate, by whom alone we draw near to God, Romanists hold, according to the authoritative dogmas of popes and councils, that there are multitudes of mediators; and that we require the intercession of many glorified saints, as their prayers on our behalf are of singular benefit and efficacy, in obtaining for us desired blessings.

The worship of saints, as it is sanctioned and enjoined by the papacy, is chiefly recommended with the view of showing the advantage of their prayers for persons on earth, to obtain for them deliverance, and temporal and spiritual benefit. Those who are declared worthy to be invoked, and not all who are supposed to be admitted to glory, but either such as all Christians denominate saints—as the apostles and primitive Christians and martyrs, or such as by papal decrees have been *canonized*, and their names placed in the calendar for stated veneration and worship;—numbers of these can, in no sense, be considered entitled to be ranked as saints, much less to be regarded, on account of eminent saintship, to have claims for peculiar honour and veneration. Some of these were blinded fanatics, distinguished for ignorance, cruelty, and immorality. Others were chiefly noted for the qualities of laziness, disgusting filthiness, and severe bodily mortifications. The pretended miracles which some of those so-called saints are said to have wrought in confirmation of the grossest error and of degrading superstitions, are wholly incredible. And some who have been assigned the highest place in Romish saint-worship have been notorious persecutors, and the chief instruments of hindering learning and civilization, of shedding in torrents the blood of God's saints, and

of opposing and destroying the liberties of mankind. The offering of prayers to such a heterogeneous mass is evidently blinded idolatry of the worst kind; and to expect benefit from their presenting supplications which are entrusted to such intercessors is only yielding one's self to the "deceivableness of unrighteousness."

The distinctions which Romanists are accustomed to make between the different kinds of worship, in order to vindicate or recommend the invocation of departed saints, is wholly destitute of Scripture warrant, and is not even observed in practice by those who profess subjection to the papacy. To meet the charge made against the doctrine of the invocation of saints, that it inculcates idolatry, they allege that they do not teach that saints are gods, or that they have power of themselves to confer the blessings for which their votaries pray. They invent the figment of different kinds of worship—that of *Latreia*, or supreme veneration, which is due to God alone; *Hyperdouleia*, that which is given to the Virgin Mother; and *Duleia*—an inferior homage with which saints are to be worshipped. On this system, saints in heaven are viewed as occupying stations of dignity and influence, and so are entitled to our high esteem and veneration. They are spoken of as being those whom God cannot but specially regard, when they employ their influence on behalf of suppliants on earth. Hence the Romish church, through its councils and doctors, teaches that persons should address prayers to them, and that they intercede with God for such. Departed saints are termed "*Intercessors of mediation*," not of "*redemption*." It is sufficient to say that this distinction is quite above the comprehension of common people, and has no



foundation in the word of God. With special emphasis it is declared, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou fear."\* All worship of creatures, however pure and exalted they are, is, according to Scripture, will-worship and idolatry. Besides, for saints in heaven to hear the prayers and know the cases of suppliants who address them, would require them to be possessed of Divine attributes, such as Omnipresence and Omniscience. If it is alleged, as Romanists do, when they reply to this objection, that God makes known to saints in heaven, who stand in His immediate presence, the requests that are offered on earth, and that they afterwards present them, this, to say the least, is an absurd and circuitous way of answering prayers, which we are always taught in the Scriptures may be immediately addressed to the Father in heaven.

When Romanists seek plausibly to recommend the mediation of saints in heaven as intercessors, by stating that this is only carrying out more fully what is done on earth by believers interceding for one another, it may be replied that the cases are by no means parallel. Saints on earth only pray for others, while they rest wholly on the exclusive intercession of Christ for a favourable answer to their petitions. The intercession of Christ in heaven is a priestly act, which none who do not fill the sacerdotal office can perform. Under the Aaronical dispensation, the high priest alone, unaccompanied by any of the congregation, might enter within the veil and present the offering with incense for the people for whom he acted; so now, Christ, as He

\* See "Wylie on the Papacy," p. 365.

suffered alone, has Himself entered the holy place not made with hands, to plead His merits, as the sole ground why the prayers of His people on earth should be heard and graciously answered.

The teaching of the Romish church respecting the invocation and intercession of departed saints is plain and explicit, although there is in it a certain vagueness, as if designed to meet the charge of it not enjoining idolatry, and yet at the same time holding out direct encouragement to practise it. In the creed of Pope Pius IV., which is generally accepted as a part of the rule of faith of Romanists, and is matter of the solemn oath of Popish bishops, it is declared—"Likewise, that the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honoured and invoked, that they offer prayers for us, and that their relics are to be venerated." The Council of Trent, in its 25th Session, commands "all bishops and others who have the charge of teaching, to labour with diligence, assiduously to instruct the faithful concerning the invocation and intercession of saints—teaching them that the saints who reign together with Christ offer their prayers to God for men; that it is a good and useful thing suppliantly to invoke them and to flee to their prayers' help and assistance." Those the Council denounces as "impious" who deny that the saints who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven are to be invoked, or who affirm that they do not pray for men, or that to beseech them to pray for us is idolatry.

In the Catechism of the Council of Trent it is said, "The veneration and invocation of saints and angels are not forbidden by the first commandment." Again, "Their intercession, therefore, we invoke, because they always see the face of God, and are

constituted by Him the willing advocates of our salvation." And it is furthermore added, "To honour the saints who sleep in the Lord, to invoke their intercession, and to venerate their sacred relics and ashes—far from diminishing, tends considerably to increase the glory of God, in proportion as the Christian hope is thus animated and fortified, and he himself excited to the imitation of their virtues." To meet the charges made by Protestants that the invocation of saints enjoined by the Romish church is direct worship, and so is idolatry, such writers as *Bossuet* maintain that according to the authoritative decrees, Romanists "only pray to saints to pray for them." It is pleaded, too, that while the Council of Trent teaches the dogma, it does not expressly command the practice of invocation. Papists, in arguing with Protestants, are accustomed to affirm that "the church has not enjoined or commanded prayers to saints." This can only be taken as an instance of the Jesuitical reasoning which is a common characteristic of Romish theologians and apologists. It exhibits their utter want of candour and veracity. Whatever may be said of the theory of the Church of Rome on the subject, it is most manifest that the practice is to address direct worship, and this of the highest kind, to glorified saints; and they are invoked to do for their votaries what it is only the prerogative of Deity to perform; and in cases not a few, the power of saints to work deliverance and bestow salvation is represented as superior to that of the persons of the Godhead. Instead of condemning the practice, which is universal in the Romish churches, of direct worship to departed saints, the highest authorities of that church enjoin it; and received liturgies, in innumerable passages, give

specimens of prayers addressed to the saints which can only mean that they are regarded as the authors and bestowers of all possible good. Not merely as intercessors, but because of their merits, the Romish Missal teaches that we are to seek for the bestowal of blessings. Thus—"May the holy prayers of blessed Andrew, the apostle, we beseech thee, O Lord, render our sacrifices pleasing to Thee; that what we solemnize in his honour, his merits may render acceptable." "O God, by whose favour we celebrate the glory of blessed Saturninus, the martyr, grant that we may be assisted by his merits." "May the intercession, O Lord, of Bishop Peter, the apostle, render the prayers and offerings of Thy church acceptable to Thee, that the mysteries we celebrate in his honour may obtain for us the pardon of our sins."\* The distinction between *douleia* (saint worship) and *latreia* (that due to the supreme God) is wholly overlooked in the liturgies, Breviary, and other authorised writings of the Church of Rome. Thus, in the Breviary, confession to the saints is placed on a level with God in the general confession of saints—"I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever virgin; to blessed Michael the archangel; to blessed John the Baptist; to the holy apostles, Peter and Paul; and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault—through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech the blessed Mary, ever virgin; the blessed Michael the archangel; the blessed John the Baptist; the holy apostles, Peter and Paul; and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me. May the Almighty God have mercy on me, and forgive me my sins, and

\* See "Wylie on the Papacy," p. 372.



bring me to everlasting life. May the almighty and merciful Lord give me pardon—Amen—absolution, and remission of all my sins. Amen.” The excess and extravagance of saint-worship, as authorised and practised in the Church of Rome, are most clearly seen in connection with the veneration given to the Virgin Mother. Whether we examine the books of Romish theologians, the Litanies of the Virgin, or the recent mandates of Popes and Romish dignitaries, or have regard to the universal practice of Romanists in their acts of superstitious worship, it may be affirmed in truth, with a vivid writer, the author of “*Rome in the Nineteenth Century*,” that the Virgin Mary is “the goddess of all Roman Catholic countries; and that, for one prayer offered to the persons of the Godhead, *nineteen* are offered continually to the Virgin Mother.” In the Psalter of *St. Bonaventura* the name of Mary is substituted for that of Jehovah, and the prayers offered to the Supreme Being are directly presented to her. Thus—“In thee, O Lady, have I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; in thy grace uphold me.” “Unto thee, O Mary, have I cried when my heart was in heaviness, and thou hast heard me from the top of the everlasting hills.” The grand gospel invitation (Matt. xi. 28) is in like manner changed, and the sinner, instead of being called to come to Christ, is invited to come for salvation to the Virgin: “Come unto Mary, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and she shall refresh your souls.” Sometimes forms of prayer are employed by Romanists, under papal sanction, which make a Trinity of God, the Virgin, and the saints. In 1817 a prayer was issued for the faithful, to the use of which an indulgence of 300 days was annexed. It ran in these words—



“ Jesus, Joseph, Mary, assist me in my last agony;  
 Jesus, Joseph, Mary, I breathe my soul to you in peace.”

What acts of more solemn worship could be given than those which are expressed in these words? and yet they plainly declare that they are equally offered to Joseph and Mary, as to God Himself. This veneration and worship of the Virgin Mary has, in recent years, been carried out to the most extravagant length by the head of the Romish church and his subordinates, both before the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and since. In Ireland especially, in catechisms and pastorals issued by Romish prelates, the worship *latreia*, which belongs exclusively to God supreme, is claimed for and given to Mary. Thus, in a tract published in 1832, “with the permission of superiors,” under the title of the “Last Testament of the Holy Virgin,” there is a prayer in these words—“O ever blessed Virgin Mary, the avenue of God’s tender mercies to man! Thou wert promised from the beginning of the world to crush the serpent’s head.” Towards the end it is said—“From conviction that as without Mary you can do nothing, so with her you can do all.” “All-powerful Virgin! pray for Ireland!” The late *Cardinal Cullen*, in several pastorals, enjoined the offering of special prayers to Mary, declaring her to be all the hope of the faithful! and that from her every blessing may be expected! On the 2nd February, 1849, the late Pope Pius the Ninth, in an Encyclical Letter, soliciting the suffrages of the bishops to the doctrine of the *Immaculate Conception*, uses words which plainly mean that Rome knows no other God save Mary, and worships her as the only Saviour. Thus, he says—“The Virgin is raised by the greatness of her merits, above all

the choirs of angels, up to the throne of God, who has crushed under the foot of her virtues the head of the old serpent." Again, it is said, "The foundation of our confidence is in the most holy Virgin, since it is in her that God has placed the plenitude of all good, in such sort that if there be in us any hope, if there be any spiritual health, we know that it is from her that we receive it, because it is the will of Him who hath willed that we should have all by the instrumentality of Mary." Language could not more plainly ascribe to a creature that worship and homage that belong exclusively to God supreme, or rob the Mediator of all the glory that pertains to Him as the Intercessor for His saints with God, and the dispenser to them of all spiritual and heavenly blessings.

The increasing growth of Mariolatry throughout the Romish communion is strikingly shown in Seymour's "*Mornings among the Jesuits at Rome.*" In a conversation with *Ventura*, a Jesuit father, it was admitted by the Jesuit that the worship of the Virgin Mary was everywhere increasing in depth and intenseness of devotion. That there were now many of their divines who are teaching, that as a woman brought in death, so a woman was to bring in life; that as a woman brought in sin, so a woman was to bring in holiness; that as Eve brought in damnation, so Mary was to bring in salvation; and that the effect of this opinion was largely to increase the reverence and worship given to the Virgin Mary. When further asked, "Whether, as we regard Eve as the first sinner, so we are to regard Mary as the first Saviour—the one the author of sin, the other the author of the remedy?" the Jesuit replied at once, "such was precisely the view which he wished to ex-

press;" and he added, "this was taught by St. Alphonso de Ligouri, and was a growing opinion." In the same work, the author mentions his having seen an altar-piece in the Cathedral in Milan, where, with reference to a dream or vision of St. Bernard, two ladders are represented as reaching from earth to heaven. At the top of one stands Christ, and at the top of the other stands Mary. Not one of those souls who attempted to enter heaven by the ladder of Christ succeeded—all fell back; but of those who ascended by the ladder of Mary, not one failed. The Virgin, ever prompt to succour, stretched out her hand, and thus aided, the aspirants ascended with ease. When the Jesuit father was told that this was plainly taking from Christ the glory of bringing sinners to heaven, and giving it to Mary, he coolly replied that this was a prevailing sentiment now among all distinguished Romish Divines. \*

The whole invocation of departed saints, and application to them as intercessors, as taught in the Church of Rome, can only be regarded as the fruits of gross ignorance, opposed to the express precepts and diversified testimony of sacred Scripture, dishonouring to Christ, and as gross idolatry and degrading superstition. Those whom the papacy pronounces objects to be invoked, and to be taken as intercessors, are *canonized saints*. It may be at once asked, with-

\* "*Mornings among the Jesuits*," p. 56. Romish authors advocate in express terms that Mary is superior to her Son. In invoking her, they ask her to lay her commands upon her Son, of whom the Bible declares, that to Him all power in heaven and earth is committed. Again, they teach that she is superior to Christ in mercy; that she hears prayer; and pities and delivers the sinner, when Christ will not.—*Mornings among the Jesuits*, pp. 46-56.

out the possibility of a satisfactory answer, where has the church the authority to make such a distinction between saints in heaven, and to enrol one class as intercessors and exclude others? Not a few who have been judged worthy of a place in the calendar, have been, while on earth, persons known for erroneous sentiments, impure lives, the persecutors of God's people; and, instead of a blessing, their works and example a curse to society. In no part of the Scriptures, either of the Old or New Testament, is the worship or invocation of saints taught: even Romanists themselves have been constrained to admit this. Neither command, nor example, nor promise of the Bible can be shown to lend countenance to saint-worship or intercession. It is noteworthy that, in the decree of the Council of Trent on the subject, there is no reference to Scripture for proof of the doctrine. The reiterated commands of the Word are, "worship God;" "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God" (1 Timothy i. 17; Luke iv. 8). When the apostle John, overpowered with the glory of the revelations given him, was in danger of committing an act of creature-worship, the angel expressly declared, "I am thy fellow-servant; worship God."\*

For all the objects for which saints are invoked, such as *helpers*, *protectors*, and for grace and mercy, the Scriptures expressly and emphatically teach that we are to seek to God, and to no creature, however exalted. The Romish church advocates the invocation of saints on the ground that these prevail with God, on account of their merits; but the Scriptures throughout wholly deny that merit belongs to any creature, saint, or angel. None

\* Rev. xix. 10.



may plead personal merit for the attainment of his own salvation; and, consequently, the plea of merit for the salvation of others must be futile and unavailing. In the fullest sense, the invocation and intercession of saints, as taught by the Church of Rome, is Antichristian, as it dishonours and sets aside the mediatory office of Christ, and disparages His priestly work of intercession in heaven. It brings in many creature-mediators between the sinner and God, whereas it is emphatically declared—"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." \* The apostle here plainly states that there is one Mediator, and that He is God and man in one person. This completely sets aside the many human mediators invented by Antichrist. Besides, our Advocate in glory is the propitiation for the sins of those for whom He pleads. This no canonized saint can possibly be, and he is therefore wholly disqualified to be an intercessor. In fine, the practice of the invocation of saints, and taking them to be intercessors, however disguised or plausibly recommended, is idolatry and degrading superstition. The ascription of Divine attributes to a creature, or giving the honour to subordinate beings that is due to God alone; or the giving of the honour due to Christ, as sole Mediator, to any creature-mediator, is certainly idolatry—condemned alike both in the Old and New Testament. According to the Romish doctrine, the saints, and especially the Virgin mother, must be omnipresent, omniscient, and almighty; that they may be present in all places, able to hear the petitions addressed to them, and to supply their wants, and relieve the distresses of their worshippers.

\* 1 Timothy ii. 5.



Such Divine attributes Romanists do not hesitate to ascribe to the Virgin and pretended saints. Like the heathen, who worshipped deified heroes as demons, and had recourse to gods many as intercessors, they “worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is God blessed for ever ;” and they are justly exposed to the vengeance denounced against idolaters—“Confounded be all that worship graven images.”

The doctrine and practice of such invocation are superstitious, as they are based on a belief that has no evidence, either from Scripture or enlightened reason. The help and blessing sought from departed saints are purely imaginary. There cannot possibly be any clear evidence that it is ever ministered ; and therefore to depend upon it is to lean on a shadow, and give one’s self up to self-delusion. Men are thus turned away from the Creator to the creature who cannot hear or save ; and as, by a necessary law, persons become conformed to the objects they worship, this doctrine and practice of saint invocation degrade those who adopt it in life and spirit. As with ancient heathen idolaters, so is it with those who are under Romish error and bondage. “They that make them are like unto them ; so is every one that trusteth in them.” \* Can we wonder at the spirit of intolerance, bigotry, opposition to the Scriptures, and hatred, that characterise Romish dignitaries ; or the ignorance, laziness, superstition, and filthy habits that distinguish such multitudes of professed Romanists, when so many of their canonized saints had these qualifications as their chief recommendations to a place in the Roman calendar ?

\* Psalm cxv. 8.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PROMISES OF THE COVENANT—THE MATTER OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

THE intercession of Christ as His people's High Priest in heaven is intimately connected with His Surety-engagement in the covenant of redemption; and the stipulations made with Him as Mediator for the salvation of all who were given Him from eternity to be redeemed from among men. The covenant—the plan of sovereign wisdom and grace devised in the counsels of the Trinity—is the rich and unfathomable source of human salvation, and renders its enjoyment sure and unfailing to those whose names were in “the writing of the house of Israel,” inscribed “in the Lamb's book of life, from before the foundation of the world.” It is to them “ordered in all things and sure,” and is “all their salvation and desire.”

The covenant of redemption—the eternal compact between the Father and the Son, as the Representative and Surety of elect sinners—has been justly designated a “*Charter of free promises of grace and glory.*” These promises are the expression of the Divine decrees or purposes concerning the salvation of elect sinners, flowing from the sovereign grace of the Godhead, in the person of the Father, who stands as the Covenant Head on heaven's part. The conditional part of the covenant was to be performed by Christ the Surety, who was set up from everlasting, and willingly became His people's representative; and

the promissory part was the Father's. He engaged to confer all blessings upon the fulfilment of the conditions by the Surety. This effected became strictly meritorious of the blessings promised, so that their bestowment can be claimed, not only on the footing of God's faithfulness and truth, but likewise of His justice. "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and His throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in the heaven." \*

The covenant from eternity guaranteed the certainty of the condition being performed by the sinner's Surety, who could "not fail nor be discouraged, till He should set judgment in the earth." Hence it is presented to us as without any condition to be performed by us. It is all promise from beginning to end, and is often spoken as one continued promise. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." † "And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life." ‡ "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." § Hence the promises of the covenant concerning the life and salvation of the elect are *absolute* and *unconditional*, all flowing from God's sovereign grace, and the condition being perfectly fulfilled by the sinner's Surety; and God works in us to will and to do, the grace and all the duties which are con-

\* Psalm lxxxix. 35, 36, 37.

† Titus i. 2.

‡ 1 John ii. 25.

§ Heb. viii. 10.

nected with their acceptance. The covenant is sometimes in Scripture, by way of special emphasis, styled "the covenant of promise" \*—(Greek, "of the promise.") The covenant is one; but, from the time of its first publication in paradise, immediately on the back of the Fall—in the one grand fundamental promise of the Old Testament, there were many renewals of it; and these were always in the form of a promise, enlarging and making clearer that which was first given to fallen man. The original phrase is, "which covenants of the promise," to signify that, as the covenant is one, so the promise is substantially the same in all ages and dispensations, only varied in reference to the external circumstances of the modes of application.

The great ends of the covenant, as they concern the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the salvation of elect sinners, are only accomplished by the fulfilment of the promises. The Surety having implemented the condition of the covenant, in fulfilling all righteousness, the promises that were made to Him pledged the truth, holiness, and justice of Jehovah to give Him the merited reward, and to confer grace and glory upon the promised seed. When the soul of the suffering Saviour is "made an offering for sin," He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. He "shall then see His seed, and prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." †

The promises of the covenant, given to Christ, may be regarded in a twofold aspect:—1, *Those which*

\* Ephesians ii. 12.

† Isaiah lii. 10. This is the more exact rendering of the phrase.

were made to Him as Mediator, to be performed to Him personally; and 2, Those which were given to Him as the Head of the elect, and which, in their fulfilment, belong to them as well as to Him. The former promises guaranteed to Him all needed preparation for His public work, support and acceptance in His obedience and sufferings, and a glorious reward. These formed a principal matter of the pleadings of the Redeemer during His earthly ministry; and, as He entered within the dark precincts of His last dismal agony. He asked the Father for pledged support in the display of miraculous power at the grave of Lazarus, and this that the people might be convinced of the Divine covenant-faithfulness. He prayed in the immediate view of His final suffering, "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee;" and in His embittered soul-agony in the garden, He pleaded the promises of the covenant for upholding and deliverance—"Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded."\* "In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared."†

2. The promises of the covenant to the elect were first given to Christ as the Head, and made good to Him in His obedience and sufferings, and His exaltation to glory; and then they come to believers through Him. By them are given to Him "all things that pertain to life and godliness." They pledge Divine faithfulness for the bestowal of grace

\* Psalm xxii. 4, 5.

† Hebrews v. 7.



and glory; and this was primarily made to the Head and Representative of the spiritual seed. The promise of eternal life is said to have been made “before the world began,”\* and this could only have been to the Mediator of the Covenant. The express testimony of the apostle Paul declares that the promises of the covenant were given to Christ Himself. “Not to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy Seed, which is Christ.”† These promises guarantee the blessings of the Spirit, and of the inheritance of life and peace; and these, though designed to be the portion of all the believing seed, were to be all fulfilled, first to Christ personally as the Surety and Head of the redeemed. The promises are “all yea and amen in Him;”‡ unchangeably the same, and infallibly sure—ratified and confirmed by His death—that they may be perfectly fulfilled to the glory of God.

The promises to Christ the Head, and to the elect through Him, guaranteed to Him the fullness of the Spirit, all gracious assistance and acceptance in His work, and a glorious reward. They secured a covenant interest in the Father. “I will make Him my First-born, higher than the kings of the earth.”§ They promised Him the heirship of all things, and eternal felicity, with all the means of it. These promises were made out to Him as the elect’s Head, and the Father’s servant, in the whole work of His obedience unto death. They come to believers as “tried words, most pure”—as “silver seven times purified.” During His work

\* Titus i. 2.

† Gal. iii. 16.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 20.

§ Psalm lxxxiv. 26.

of obedience on earth, they were the staff on which He leaned, and by which He was comforted; and as He pleaded their fulfilment, He experienced the support and consolation which they administered in the performance of His arduous undertaking. The same precious promises which were performed to the Surety are now “yea and amen,” through Him, to the heirs of salvation. Though they were designed to guarantee to Him peculiar support and acceptance in His work—in which none other could have a share—yet the great matters embraced in these promises are, at the same time, guaranteed to all the spiritual seed.

The promises in which the saints share in common with their beloved Head, are “*exceeding great and precious.*” They secure to them the enjoyment of all that is contained in the rich treasures of the covenant—of all blessings, temporal and spiritual, which form the inheritance of the saints in light. They are “heirs of the promise,”—“heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” The covenant relation with the Father is common to them and to the Elder Brother. When He had risen from the dead, and was about to ascend to glory, He declared, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”\* The new life and spirit which enter into believers was first given to Christ as Mediator and Head; and then, from its fulness in Him, it flows forth in measure to the saints united to Him. When He desired life from the Father, it was given Him, not for Himself alone, but for His seed too. The Spirit was given Him “without measure;” and then, from its inexhaustible fulness,

\* John xx. 17.

it is communicated in measure to all the redeemed. The faithful word of promise secures this—"I will put my Spirit within them, and they shall live."\* "Thy dead man shall live; my dead body shall they arise."† "Because I live, ye shall live also."‡ "We are quickened together with Christ, and God hath raised us up together with Him, to sit with Him in heavenly places."§ Through the power of Christ's resurrection, saints are raised up with Him to newness of life. They are delivered by His atoning death from the guilt of sin, which is legal death; and, through the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, and imparting the life of Christ to the soul, they are gradually freed from its power and pollution. The justification, adoption, and sanctification of believers are matters of Divine promises, assured to believers from such high privileges belonging to the Head. As He was "justified in the Spirit," so are believers freed from condemnation, and accepted in the Beloved. The redeemed from under the law receive "the adoption of sons." Being raised up together with Christ, they "walk together with Him in newness of life." As the oil that descended upon Aaron's head ran down to the skirts of his garments,|| so out of the fulness of grace that is perpetually in our great High Priest, there are communicated to all the members of His mystical body, even the least, continuous supplies of grace for sanctification and comfort. Hence there is secured to the saints all

\* Ezekiel xxxvii. 14.

† Isaiah xxvi. 19. Such is the literal rendering of the Hebrew. The supplement, "together with," of the Authorized Version, should be omitted.

‡ John xiv. 19.

§ Eph. ii. 6.

|| Psalm cxxxiii.

that is needful for their spiritual consolation, complete holiness, and final happiness. The depository is in the hands of the blessed Trustee of the Covenant. He *received* that He might *give* gifts for men, "that the Lord God might dwell among them."\* All needed and all sufficient grace is guaranteed to the redeemed. It pleased God in Trinity that all fulness of grace should dwell in Christ,† that He might be the unfailing Source of supply, and the perfect Model to which those who receive it are at length to be fully conformed. The continued influence of grace, perseverance to the end, victory over death, and the perfection of bliss in heaven, were secured to the redeemed by covenant-stipulation and promise. These were given Him through His Surety-undertaking, as His covenant reward, and as their Head; they are given Him, too, for the benefit and blessing of His body—the church, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. ‡

The *temporal* blessings which believers require are matters of Divine gracious promise, and they come to them as they were first given to Christ, the Head, to be by Him conferred upon His people. Through Him the forfeiture of earthly good things, which took place by the breach of the first covenant, is taken off, and the curse on the creature is removed. United to Christ, the second Adam, they obtain a new covenant-right to the creatures. "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."§ The promise of temporal good, which is *yea* and *amen* in Christ, is a promise of protection

\* Psalm lxviii. 18.      † Col. i. 19.      ‡ Eph. i. 23.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 23. The supplement should be *God*, and not the *Father*, as in the Authorized Version.



from all evil things in life. It is a Divine shade and covert over their bodies and spirits at all times—over their life, substance, habitation, and reputation. It guarantees to them an adequate provision for all their temporal necessities, of whatever kind they are, safe guidance through the wilderness, death unstinged and conquered, and soul and body crucified with Christ, and made happy for evermore.

The promise of all this in the covenant made to Christ for Himself and His spiritual seed, forms the firm and constant ground of the pleadings of faith to the children of God. The Saviour had at all times, in His work of constant obedience and painful suffering, unwavering trust in the eternal promise. He pleaded it perpetually, and rested always with assured confidence, that “what God had promised He was able and ready also to perform.” This carried Him through every part of His arduous undertaking, so that He did not fail, nor was He discouraged. This, too, sustained Him in His last tremendous agony, when, “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”\* The Saviour’s perpetual work as His people’s Advocate and Intercessor in heaven, is His pleading the promises of the covenant for the advancement and triumph of His cause on the earth, and the salvation of His redeemed people. He finished the work which was given Him to do, when His soul was made an offering for sin. He can only see the travail of His soul with satisfaction when the promise given Him by the Father is performed. The “pleasure of Jehovah” prospers in His hand,

\* Heb. xii. 2.



when the word of the oath in the covenant is fulfilled. On this footing the enthroned Mediator sits at the Father's right hand, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. Here, too, is the prevailing plea of faith in the prayers of the saints, and their joyful confidence of hope. Not one good thing of all that God has spoken can fail of accomplishment. Christ Jesus, our blessed Advocate, ever stands up to plead the exceeding great and precious promises of God's truth and love; and there is no room to doubt that aught that is contained in them will be withheld from any who are graven on the palms of His hands. His mediatory work in heaven is to carry forward to ultimate perfection the work for which He came into the world. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant."\* Here is the believer's triumph in God, the Rock of his salvation, and here his sure exultant hope of all covenant blessing. "Who is a God like unto thee? He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."† As an instance of the extent and greatness of the promises made primarily to Christ, the Head, and through Him to the living members of His mystical body, may be mentioned those contained in various parts of the eighty-ninth psalm. This has been appropriately styled the "*Covenant Psalm*," as it is a condensed and expressive epitome of the constitution

\* Luke i. 72.

† Micah vii. 18-20.

and promises of the covenant of redemption. Throughout, it is a cluster of great and precious promises, made first to the Mediator, and accomplished to Him personally in His obedience and sufferings, and His exaltation to glory; and then through Him fulfilled to the covenant seed. Thus when He is "found" as Jehovah's "servant," and anointed with the holy oil of the Spirit for His office and work, it is promised, "With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm shall also strengthen Him."\* The promise was made out to the Redeemer in His humble condition, as it is still to Him in His state of exaltation-glory. Omnipotence sustained and upheld Him—the fulness of Divine favour attends Him. He is ever the "Man of the Father's right hand." The same strength and power is guaranteed to all the redeemed. The omnipotence of God is employed in their defence. Divine strength is ever exerted on their behalf. This is what the Christian mainly requires, and is the ground of the saints' perpetual rejoicing. Jesus among us, and the hand and promise of Jehovah that upheld and established Him, continually working with us. Protection from enemies, deliverance and victory, were promised to Christ, and are secured to all His spiritual seed. The great enemy and his instruments could not prevail against Him, or "beguile" Him, nor the wicked one "afflict" Him. Though He was assailed and tempted, the prince of this world had nothing in Him on which to found a temptation, and He could not therefore prevail. Though once seized as our Surety, and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all, He paid fully our vast debt, and it cannot

\* Psalm lxxxix. 21.

be exacted any more. Satan can never more tempt Him, nor will our sins ever again burden Him. All His enemies are crushed before Him; all His opposers are plagued with Divine vengeance. So is it also assured to Christ's people. He makes common cause with them. His enemies are theirs, and theirs are His. The tempter cannot beguile any who are united to Christ, and who trust in Him. He may vex and afflict, but He cannot prevail. Even when the believer falls, He shall arise, and enemies shall be put to confusion. "No weapon that is formed against the church shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."\* The God of peace shall shortly bruise Satan under the feet of the righteous.† The latter end of the wicked is to be destroyed together. This deliverance and ultimate victory are guaranteed to Christ and His saints by Jehovah's mercy and faithfulness; and the honour of His name is concerned to secure their exaltation. "My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with Him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted."‡ The saints, by the covenant-promise, have a part in the extended dominion of the Mediator. His hand of power shall be over the sea, and His right hand over earth's mightiest rivers. His large and great dominion shall be extended from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. In this extended universal dominion of the Redeemer, His people have an eminent share. They reign with Him now as a kingdom of priests, and hereafter they shall rise

\* Isa. liv. 17.

† Rom. xvi. 20.

‡ Psa. lxxxix. 24.

and reign with Him on earth a thousand years.\* The "kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."† The language of joyful appropriation and exultant praise is that of the Mediator pleading and rejoicing; and is, at the same time, the heartfelt expression of the saint taking hold of God's covenant. "He shall cry unto me, thou art my Father, my God, the rock of my salvation." The significant and precious promises which follow are the gracious answer, containing the fullest assurance of the highest exaltation and of the richest eternal blessings—"I will make Him my First-born, higher than the kings of the earth." The pledge for the fulfilment of the promise is Divine unchangeable mercy; and the perpetuity of the seed of the covenant is inseparably connected with the stability of the throne of the Redeemer, outliving all the destinies of the earth, and stable "as the days of heaven." In all those bright and precious promises to the saints there is no mention made of *conditions* on their part. They are as absolute and unconditional as they can possibly be. Even when the children of the seed backslide, and are disobedient, they are chastened; but the covenant which is God's remains unbroken, and the promise is unfailing. "Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from Him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."‡ How rich the provision of the everlasting covenant! How exceeding great and excellent are its promises! how stable the ground of assurance that, through the intercession

\* Rev. xx. 4.

† Dan. vii. 27.

‡ Psa. lxxxix. 33, 34.

of the Mediator, they shall to the largest extent, in time and throughout eternity, be all fulfilled! Believers should ever rejoice in their inheritance. They are heirs of the promise. After they have believed, "they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise," who is "the earnest" of their future bliss, and heaven, "the land of promise," is the full and blessed possession.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE INTERCESSION OF THE SPIRIT FOR THE SAINTS— DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IT AND THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

It has been already shown that Christ Jesus is the sole Advocate and Intercessor for the saints with God. This not only excludes the interference of all creatures in this momentous matter, but it likewise limits intercession on behalf of God's people to the second person of the Godhead—the Mediator of the Covenant. In the economy of human redemption, God the Father is the hearer of prayer; and His province it is to confer the blessings which are sought in prayer. As Jesus, the Son of God, is our great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens to present the blood of His atoning sacrifice before the throne, to obtain for us pardon and acceptance, so He alone performs this important function of the sacerdotal office. On no other intercession, whether creature or divine, may we rely for pleading our cause in the court of heaven; on none else should we depend for deliverance from the accusations of the adversary, and for receiving the blessings for which we supplicate.

It is nowise inconsistent with this statement that God's people are said to be dependent upon the intercession of the Holy Spirit, and are represented as deriving from it invaluable benefit. In a pregnant passage in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans (ver. 26, 27), the third person of the Godhead is represented as helping *the infirmity* of the

saints, by interceding for them. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." To animate the saints under manifold trials and discouragements, the apostle tells them that present sufferings bear no proportion to the future glory that shall be revealed in them. He had further encouraged them by the certainty of their glorious manifestation, when the travailing pains of creation shall cease, and there shall be "a new heavens and earth wherein for ever shall dwell righteousness." Then, as if to meet the misgivings, not infrequent of believers under trials, when they feel so weak in themselves and so little acquainted with the source of encouragement, the Spirit's effectual help under their infirmities, and His prayers in and for them, are held out as sufficient to allay and banish every desponding fear, and to fill them with strong consolation. The Spirit, in like manner as hope does, "helps our infirmities." These are all our weaknesses and sufferings. As if to indicate that we are constantly weak and liable to suffering from all quarters, such trials are said to be specially *ours*; and to express the idea that our whole state is that of weakness in relation to all spiritual exercises, the term is emphatically expressed in the singular number—"the Spirit helps our infirmity."\* This

\* The reading of the best MSS. is "*infirmity*," in the singular number, instead of "*infirmities*," as in the Authorized Version.

weakness is in the performance of all our duties, and in the diversified trials to which we are exposed. This infirmity has a chief reference to prayer, considered as the pouring out of the heart to God, and as the appointed way of communion with Him. Here of ourselves we are all weakness. "We know not what to pray for as we ought." Neither are we thoroughly acquainted with our danger nor our wants. In respect to *temporal blessings*, we do not know *what to ask*—whether the grant would conduce to God's glory and our good; and in relation to *spiritual blessings*, while believers may know *the matter of* prayer from the directions of the word, we are unable "to ask as we ought," partly from the darkness of the mind on spiritual subjects, and partly from the admixture of the feelings and views which spring from the fleeting objects of sense with our spiritual frames, together with the felt inability to express in suitable terms spiritual emotions and desires. Our natural ignorance and blindness are such that we do not know to make a right choice of the things we should pray for. Even God's people are ever ready to ask in prayer things that are inexpedient or hurtful; as Moses when he sought earnestly to be permitted to enter the promised land; or as Paul when he "besought the Lord thrice" to have "the thorn in the flesh" removed. We are constantly prone to seek things spiritual that, with the spirit unchanged, we would be unfit to receive. We "ask amiss" what is right, while the object and end for which we seek it is sinful. The trials of a temporal kind from which we seek deliverance may be the necessary discipline, the continuance of which is for our good. The outward good things on which our minds are set may be seen by God to be to our injury—the withholding of

them, when we ask them, to be for our advantage. In such cases, the only effectual help against our painful and great infirmity is that which the Holy Spirit administers. He helps, over against and with us, by lifting up our burden, and carrying it together with us.\*

This seasonable and powerful help the Spirit administers as a promised *Spirit of grace and supplication*, † poured out and dwelling in the heart. He makes intercession for us “with groanings that cannot be uttered.” ‡ He intercedes for us, and that *abundantly*. He is that other advocate and comforter which the Saviour promised to send to dwell in them and be with them—another than Himself. He ever pleads for His people before the throne, while the Spirit draws forth petitions from their hearts by His gracious and powerful operation. Jesus, as our great High Priest in heaven, intercedes continually on our behalf *without us*; the Holy Spirit intercedes *within us*. In the one case and the other it is a Divine person who makes intercession. The Saviour, the God-man in heaven; and the Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity, pleading in the hearts of believers on earth. The great and un-

\* The compound verb in the original is singularly expressive. It means to take hold of a thing with another to aid, by taking part of one's work, or working together with him. *Calvin* says—“Great is the force of the Greek verb, *helps*, importing that the Spirit taking to Himself parts of the load, by which our infirmity weighs us down, not only aids and succours us, but thereby raises us up; as if He had gone in under the load with us.” *Beza* expresses the same idea, when he compares the Spirit's help to that “of a nurse helping her little child by upholding it by the sleeve.”

† Zechariah xii. 10.

‡ Romans viii. 26.



changeable love and condescension of Christ is displayed by His intercession for us in heaven; the love and condescension of the Spirit by His interceding in our hearts. The Saviour pleads by presenting His precious blood, and asking with authority the blessings which His people need. The Holy Spirit pleads by exciting fervent desires, and producing groans which do not find expression in words, and which are sometimes wholly unutterable.\* This intercession of the Spirit is more than His teaching us to pray, as one man may teach another. He does not by a mere external influence awaken certain desires and feelings in our hearts. He dwells within the believer as a principle of life and activity. He is a "well of living water springing up to life eternal." In all spiritual emotions and exercises there is a concurrence or joint agency of the Divine and human. The Spirit greatly assists or aids us in our felt manifold weakness, not by praying alone or separately from us, but by pleading in our prayers and under our infirmities.

The Spirit is chiefly given for this purpose, and this is His great work for the children of God. As the "Spirit of truth" He helps their infirmities by teaching them to know themselves, their God and Saviour, their real condition before God, their great

\* The apostle does not mean that the Spirit Himself prays or utters forth the unutterable groanings. He is said to do what He causes us to do. *Calvin* expresses this with his usual discriminating clearness—"The Spirit of God is declared to intercede, not because He in very deed as a suppliant sets Himself forth to praying and groaning, but because He excites in our minds those petitions which it concerns us to plead (solicit). He then so affects our hearts that by their ardour they penetrate the hearer."



and precious privileges. He quickens us and leads us to look away continually from ourselves and our infirmities, to Him who alone is able and ever willing to help in our time of need. Above all, He helps our infirmities by directing us to the throne of grace, there to pour out our hearts, to cast down our burdens, and wait and look for the grace needed and promised. As "the Spirit of grace and supplication," He implants all grace, and is the fountain of grace in the heart. He excites into lively exercise holy graces;—and this, even when there may not be expressions in words, is prayer that God hears and accepts. "Thy servant has found in His heart to pray this prayer unto Thee." "Ye people pour out your hearts before Him; God is our high refuge."\* The Spirit makes us experimentally acquainted with our wants and infirmities, and directs to the source of all needed supply. As the "Spirit of supplications," He implants spiritual desires and longings, dictates suitable petitions, and enables to utter them aright. He removes all hindrances to prayer, such as wandering thoughts, languid affections, fears and disbelieving doubts. He fills the mouth with arguments, enables to look up, expecting an answer; and inspires the assured confidence that petitions offered in Christ's name will be graciously heard, accepted, and abundantly answered. Through the Spirit we come "with boldness" to the throne of grace. "What things soever we desire when we pray, believing that we receive them, we shall have them."† "Thus saith the Lord, the Maker thereof,

\* Psalm lxii. 8.

† "When the Spirit maketh intercession for us, it is not by any direct supplication from Himself to God the Father in

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." \*

This intercession of the Spirit in and for the saints is essentially different from that of our great High Priest within the veil. The Saviour stands forth as our Advocate in heaven to present His merits in behalf of guilty sinners, and to plead the cause of His people. The Spirit is not like the Mediator, invested with human nature, and He cannot therefore be a pleader who is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and tried in all points like us. The intercession of the Spirit consists in the moral and spiritual influence which He

behalf of any one individual, but it is by pouring upon that individual the Spirit of grace and supplication. The man whom He prays for is, in fact, the organ of His prayer. The prayer passes, as it were, from the Spirit through him who is the object of it." Those groanings of the Spirit of God which cannot be uttered are those unutterable desires wherewith the heart of the seeker after Zion is changed, and which in defect of language, perhaps even in defect of any clear and definite conceptions, can only find vent in the ardent but unspeakable breathings of one who feels his need, and longs to be relieved from it; who hath a strong and general appetency after righteousness, and yet can only sigh it forth in ejaculations of intense earnestness. Now these are here called the groanings of the Spirit of God, but it is, in fact, He who hath awakened them in the spirit of man. When He intercedes for a believer, the believer's own heart is the channel through which the intercession finds its way to the throne of grace. It is not that there is any want either of light or of utterance about Him; but he doeth His work gradually upon us, and often infuses a desirousness into our hearts before He reveals the truth with distinctness into our understandings."—*Chalmers's Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. ii., p. 78, 79. See also p. 81 of the same volume for some fine thoughts well expressed on the same subject.

\* Jeremiah xxxiii. 2.

exerts on the hearts and spirits of those in whom He dwells as an Advocate and Comforter. He teaches them to pray—drawing out their thoughts and minds in earnest spiritual desires; giving them freedom, confidence, and resignation in prayer; and filling their mouth with suitable expressions and arguments, and the assured hope of acceptance. The advocacy of Christ in heaven is a priestly act, meritorious, and all-perfect; that of the Spirit is moral—acting upon the renewed nature, and advancing it more and more to perfection. The one is intercession, perpetual and all-efficacious, carried on in heaven; the other is gracious and powerful, the sphere of its operation being on earth. The object of the Saviour's intercession is to remove all obstacles that lie in the way to the believer's acceptance with God, and to obtain for him all blessings of life and salvation. That of the Spirit's intercession is to operate on the believer's renewed nature, to fit him for offering suitable petitions through the Mediator, and for the reception of gracious answers from the throne. Although essentially different, the intercession of the Spirit on earth, and that of the Saviour in heaven, are most intimately connected. They cannot be separated, and both are indispensably required in order to the enjoyment of the great benefits of the covenant of grace, and the fruits of the Redeemer's purchase. Thus, too, the ascension-gifts which He received that He might give to men, even the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them, become ours. The help and intercession of the Spirit enable to pray; the advocacy of the Redeemer in heaven receives the prayers and groans of saints on earth, and renders them all-prevalent and efficacious with God. The

glorious Hearer of prayer, to whom all flesh shall come, has gracious regard to the pleadings of the Advocate within the veil, and to the intercession of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. Both are "for the saints," though they are in a different way presented, and both are equally heard and accepted. Of the Intercessor before the throne it is emphatically said, "Him the Father heareth always, and in Him He is ever well pleased." And concerning the Spirit's internal pleading, with unutterable groanings, it is declared, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." \* The different character of the Saviour's and the Spirit's intercession is well stated by Dr. Chalmers—"The one intercession is pure and altogether unmixed with the dross of earthliness. The other passes through a corrupt medium, and finds its way among the adverse impediments of an earthly nature; and by the time that it cometh forth in expression has had to encounter the elements of darkness and carnality that are within us. And not from any defect in the power which originates our prayers, but from a defect in the organ by which they are conveyed, do they arise, as so many broken and indistinct aspirations, to Him who sitteth on the throne." † The Holy Spirit never assumes the office of interceding priest in glory, nor does He perform any part of His work as an Advocate before the throne. His office is "to take the things of Christ, and show them unto us," and thereby stir us up to prayer and holy effort. *Augustine* well says—"The

\* Rom. viii. 27.

† Lectures on the Romans, vol. ii., p. 84.



Divine Spirit does not groan or intercede in and by Himself as God, and belonging to the Trinity; but He intercedes by His influence upon us, and by leading us to aspirations which language cannot express."

On two grounds we may rest with confidence that the intercession of the Spirit in and for us will be acceptable with God through Christ. *First, He searcheth the heart*, and knows all its thoughts and desires and emotions, and He *recognises* and *approves*\* the intercession of the Spirit,—what He means by His unutterable groanings. And, *secondly*, the Spirit's intercession for the saints is "*according to the will of God.*" While believers often do not know to ask either what is best for them, or agreeable to God's will, the Holy Spirit dictates those petitions, and excites those desires which are consistent with the Divine purposes, and which God wills to hear and satisfy. God, the searcher of hearts, beholds the surging inward emotions of believers in prayer, and knows and approves what the Spirit means by secret groans which He excites within us, because the gracious Intercessor by them pleads only for what God Himself means to bestow. The mind of the Spirit and of the Father, who hears prayer, is one and the same; and therefore the "inwrought fervent prayer," which is the intercession of the Spirit, cannot but avail much.†

The character of those for whom the Spirit pleads is specifically marked, "He maketh intercession for

\* The original Greek verb means to *know* or *recognise* with approval.

† See James v. 16. The Greek epithet rendered "effectual," in our version, properly means "inwrought." "energised."



the *saints*." Sinners He regenerates; in and for saints He intercedes. The mind renewed, the Spirit disposes to pray. He illuminates it, and thus teaches to pray; and He helps mental infirmities and enables to pray. All real prayer is from the Spirit, yet it is the believer's prayer. The mind without the Spirit cannot pray aright, nor does the Spirit pray apart from the believer's mind; it is in all cases by the Spirit influencing the mind that the believer prays.

The Divine personality of the Spirit is distinctly seen in this matter. Knowing all God's purposes and promises, He directs and enables the believer to pray ever in accordance with these. We are taught by the Spirit to pray according to God's revealed will, which is made known in His word; and we are inclined and drawn by the same blessed Agent to yield a ready submission to His secret will or decree, knowing that in all things it is holy, and just, and good. How full and joyful the confidence that "if we ask anything according to God's will, He heareth us; and if He hear us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him!"\* The intercession of the Spirit within is the echo of the Saviour's intercession in heaven. The Saviour's gracious assurance is, that if any man ask that which is agreeable to His will, He will give it. Notwithstanding the imperfection and darkness that may be in the believer's requests, yet as they are prompted by the Spirit, they are agreeable to the Divine will, and have therefore the recommendation which God has pledged Himself to accept and answer.

*Tholuck*, in his work on the Romans, quotes a

\* 1 John v. 14.

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beautiful sentence from *Martin of Tours* on this subject—"As the mother does to the child, so does the Holy Spirit repeat before us the supplications which we must seek to lisp after Him." And *Leighton*, in his spiritual, experimental manner, appositely remarks—"The work of the Spirit is in exciting the heart at times of prayer to break forth in ardent desires to God, whatsoever the words be, whether new or old, yea, possibly without words, and then most powerful when it ends at last, but vents in sighs and groans that cannot be expressed. Our Lord understands the language of those perfectly, and likes it best. He knows and approves the moving of His own Spirit; He looks not to the outward appearance, the shell of words, as men do." *Bishop Hall*, in like manner, speaks briefly but tersely of the Spirit's intercession—"The Spirit of God aids us by His gracious work in us; stirring up our drowsy and dull hearts to make powerful supplications to God, with sighs and groans that cannot be expressed."

## CHAPTER XI.

### IMPORTANT TRUTHS CONFIRMED BY CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

THE resurrection of Christ from the dead was the most powerful and convincing testimony to all the fundamental truths involved in His mission and work on earth. He was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power. His work of obedience and suffering was shown to be accepted; the reward promised in the covenant was given Him; and the new and living way to God and to heaven for the redeemed was fully opened. The intercession of the Saviour, which is another step of His exaltation, is likewise a confirming evidence of truths the most important. His priestly work in heaven exhibits a bright and full manifestation of His own glory, and is followed by precious results to the safety and stability of the church, and to the happiness of God's people.

It declares the *Godhead of the Saviour*. The High Priest who intercedes is "JESUS, THE SON OF GOD." As the worth and efficacy of His death depended upon the dignity of His person, so the acceptance and prevalence of His intercession require that the pleadings of our Advocate be of infinite value. That He should be a prevailing intercessor for an innumerable multitude of sinners, obtaining for them acceptance through His blood, speaking on their behalf, sending them the Spirit, and preserving them in God's favour, displays Him exalted above the rank of any creature. The Advocate with the

Father must present the case of every saint. He must therefore have particular and minute knowledge of all that believe on His name. He hears all their petitions, understands and sympathises with them in their numerous griefs, and burdens, and trials. He can receive applications from thousands of creatures, and give special attention to each at the same time. His must be therefore the knowledge of Omniscience. He is the Lamb as it had been slain, "having seven eyes," as He stands before the throne. He must have infinite skill as well as supreme power and authority to meet the accusations of enemies against those for whom He pleads, and to bring them into prostrate subjection under His feet. And that His intercession be perpetual and all-prevalent, He must be "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." He is "the Lord who changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Jesus, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Again, *the love of God* to sinners is illustriously displayed in the intercession of the Saviour on their behalf. Herein is manifested the sovereign love of the Father, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation."\* This involved the appointment of an Advocate and Intercessor to secure the ends of the propitiatory sacrifice. The love of God, which is so illustriously displayed in sending His only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners, is equally seen in entrusting to the same glorious Person the management of all the concerns of the redeemed in the court of heaven. To no seraph or cherub in glory is this great work committed, but only to Him who lay in the bosom of



the Father, and who is equal with Himself in power and glory and in every Divine perfection. The love that chose these from eternity to be redeemed, and gave them to Christ as their Mediator and Surety, is seen in its greatness and unchangeableness in the continual intercession of One who is the Elect in whom His soul ever delights. The Advocate in heaven who pleads for the saints is "Jesus Christ the righteous." He is Jehovah's love embodied; and His perpetual intercession is one of its brightest and most amazing manifestations. Nor less conspicuously is seen the *love of Christ* in His intercession for the saints. He was under no obligation to interpose to save them from wrath. Yet "He loved them, and gave Himself for them." He "loves His own that are in the world to the end." He identifies Himself with them, and constantly maintains their right and cause. He ever regards them with yearning pity and compassion. Their names are engraven on the pectoral of the High Priest as He appears in glory. They are set "as a seal upon His heart," and are inscribed "on the palms of His hands," when He lifts them up to plead in glory. Like the fire which was perpetually burning upon the altar of old, so the intercession of the Saviour for His saints shows the constant fervency of His love towards them. With His whole heart He pleads their cause with a love that exceeds all finite dimensions, and surpasses knowledge. He presents their petitions with much incense on the mercy-seat, and never rests till He obtains for them answers of peace.

The *love of the Spirit* is seen likewise in the advocacy of the Saviour in heaven. With "the oil of gladness above His fellows," the High Priest of our profession is anointed when He intercedes, equally as

when He became the victim for our transgressions. The Spirit's intercession for the saints on earth, as He helps their infirmities, is but the *echo* of the intercession of the High Priest within the veil. It is the great and inconceivable love of the Spirit that leads Him to dwell in the hearts of the saints. While conscious of their weakness, darkness, and manifold pollutions, He puts within them spiritual desires, excites them in prayer, and draws forth unutterable groanings. In wondrous condescension and compassion, the Spirit *dwells within* believers, imparting to them spiritual light, purging out corruptions; and as He sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, He is to them an earnest of the heavenly inheritance. Thus, by the intercession of Christ, the great love of God in Trinity is displayed, not only in the appointment of the Redeemer as His people's Advocate on high, but likewise in all the diversified acts of His advocacy, and in the rich and manifold benefits which flow from it to the heirs of salvation.

Furthermore, the *perfection and efficacy of the atonement* are seen in the intercession of Christ. To every awakened sinner, to every weak and doubting believer, the truth of the efficacy of Christ's death to remove the curse, put away sin, and procure the blessing, is of transcendent importance. To be assured that our vast debt has been fully paid, and that it can never be again exacted, is sufficient to banish fear and to give strong consolation. All this the intercession of Christ in glory establishes. His exaltation proves that His atoning work has been accepted. That His sacrifice was but once offered, shows its perfection and acceptance. The ground of His plea in heaven is the virtue of His sufferings and death. The ancient high priest might only enter

into the most holy place with the blood of the sacrifice previously offered, and with sweet fragrant incense. While he was in the most holy place, the tinkling of the golden bells at the hem of his garment indicated that he still lived, that the blood which he had sprinkled was accepted, and that he was actively engaged on behalf of the congregation assembled in the outer court praying. Thus Christ Jesus, the High Priest of our profession, having entered heaven by His own blood, shows by the proclamation of the gospel, and by His continual and all-prevalent intercession, that the death of the Surety is efficacious to accomplish all the purposes which it was designed to effect. If we are ever tempted to doubt the virtue of Christ's death to procure pardon and peace with God, let us look to His advocacy, with its successful issue. Justly has it been said—"This verifies the merit of His passion more than all the miracles that can be wrought in His name." \*

Again, the *safety and perpetuity of the church* are secured by the intercession of Christ. His ever living to make intercession supposes that there will always be some for whom He pleads. His work in glory is constantly about the church on earth, tempted, tried, and down-trodden. He must reign till He makes all His enemies His footstool. He stands at the "golden altar" in heaven to receive and present with acceptance all the prayers of His saints. As He pleads, Zion is engraven on the palms of His hands, and her walls are continually before Him. No weapon formed against her can ever prosper. The "gates of hell" cannot prevail

\* Goodwin's Works, vol. iv.

against the foundation, or against any that are built upon it. Christ's priesthood is everlasting, and His intercession, which is a principal part of it, must continue till time shall be no more. The church of the first-born, about which it is chiefly engaged, must therefore exist throughout all ages; and her safety and salvation are amply secured by the constant and successful advocacy of Him whose eyes and whose heart are perpetually upon Zion. When the church is brought low and afflicted, and power is in the hand of the oppressor, the interference of the heavenly Advocate preserves her from destruction; the answers to His plea guarantees to her deliverance, and the overthrow of all her enemies. "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me, with good words and comfortable words." \* The revival of the church by the effusion of the Spirit is the fruit of the Saviour's intercession; and to the same cause are to be ascribed her future universal extension and glory. The exalted Advocate declares His purpose of continual earnest pleading on her behalf. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." † The blessed effect will then be the conversion of the nations, and the church's ultimate universal establishment and glory.

Furthermore, the security and happiness of the

\* Zech. i. 12, 13.

† Isaiah lxii. 1.



saints result from the advocacy of their High Priest within the veil. From many causes, the state of God's people here appears insecure, and there are strong grounds of fear that they may fall short of future felicity. Grace within them is imperfect; and they are ever liable to be led aside and overcome by unmortified corruptions. They are exposed to the constant accusations of the great adversary, and to the onsets of numerous embittered foes. In such circumstances of peril and danger, there is no stable ground of security found in themselves. The sins which they commit are in their nature ruinous; and the new life imparted to them is weak and in need of continual supplies of grace from the Fountain to maintain and increase it. It is altogether by a work without themselves, and by a principle communicated to them from above, that they are preserved from falling, and that they are made partakers of happiness here and hereafter. The intercession of their Advocate is amply sufficient to secure the believer's stability amidst onsets and dangers from every quarter. "If any man sin," the Advocate obtains forgiveness by His own merits; and the most advanced believers have an interest in His pleading, as well as the weakest. "*We* have an Advocate." He is able and ready to meet and silence every accusation laid in against them. He is ever prepared to succour effectually them that are tempted. And for all the services, however imperfect and polluted, of His servants, He can procure acceptance. He bears continually the iniquities of their holy things when He appears in the presence of the Lord, and the incense of His mediation presents to God their persons and works—the sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Their blessed Intercessor is able and ready to keep them from falling. He pro-



vides for them joy and peace in believing now, while He successfully pleads their cause. He speaks to them precious promises, while He speaks to God on their behalf, that their joy may be full. And at length He "presents them faultless" before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.\* As saints remain always imperfect and sinful while in this life, their comfort and hope are that He ever lives to intercede for them—"He surely perfects what concerns them." He saves to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

Finally, we are impressively taught the *unspeakable sin and danger of dishonouring Christ's intercession*. Those dishonour the work of the heavenly Advocate who overlook and neglect it—who restrain prayer before God, or trust to other intercessors—when they live in sin, or when they give way to unbelieving doubts and fears. If the great work for which the Mediator ever lives in heaven is to make intercession, and if on this we are dependent for salvation to the uttermost, it is surely worthy to engage our frequent thoughts and to excite our earnest affections. To undervalue it in any way is to neglect the great salvation; and if we in any wise do so we cannot escape. If we restrain or leave off prayer before God, we are numbered with hypocrites; and prayers offered otherwise than through the Angel that stands at the golden altar are accounted vain oblations, and rejected as a mere bodily service, or as the lame and the blind offered in sacrifice. As the most costly oblations that were anciently presented anywhere save on God's altar and by the anointed priest were an abomination in God's sight, and

\* Jude 24.

brought wrath and a curse upon the offerer, so no service can find acceptance and be followed by a blessing but that which is put into the hands of the Divine Intercessor, and which He intermingles with much incense. To be in perplexing doubt and despondency respecting the answer of petitions presented in Christ's name, and to give way to gloomy forebodings because of felt sins and shortcomings, is sinful distrust of the glorious Advocate and dishonour done to His intercession. He constantly stands up to plead. He is ever ready to hear, and to take the most desperate case in hand, and render it successful. The Father, who heareth Him always, looks ever on the face of the Anointed; and in consequence He sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. Instead of limiting His beneficence to their low desires and feeble prayers, He ever regards the powerful and prevalent intercession of their great High Priest, His well-beloved Son; and He is willing to do for them "exceeding abundantly above all they are able to ask or think."

## CHAPTER XII.

### PRACTICAL USES OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

WE should, *First, Seek a personal interest in Christ's intercession.* It is natural for men in weakness and distress to lean upon others for help and deliverance. Especially do persons, when under a sense of sin, in affliction, and apparently drawing near to death, seek an interest in the prayers of those whom they regard as accepted suppliants at the throne of grace. Even Pharaoh sought that Moses would pray to God for him that the judgments inflicted on the land might be removed. In certain times of public national calamities, Noah, Daniel, and Job are represented as interceding for the people, that judgments may be mitigated and removed, and they are in consequence taken away; and again, at other times, when iniquity has come to its height, and the period of Divine forbearance is exhausted, the prayers of such intercessors are unheard; and God threatens that His face will not be toward the people to deliver them. When the Israelites, after their murmuring in the wilderness, were bitten by the fiery flying serpents, they sought the intercession of Moses for them, saying—"We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee: pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from us."\* To have none to intercede for a people in the day of their distress is represented as a dread calamity.

\* Numbers xxi. 7.

“Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me; for I will not hear thee.”\* If it is so important to have an interest in the intercession of prayerful ones, and so great a calamity to be excluded from the prayers of believing friends, how valuable is an interest in the intercession of the High Priest in heaven! He alone is our Advocate with the Father. He is continually engaged in this work; ever ready to receive the prayers and groans of His people into the golden censer which He holds in His right hand, and to present them on the altar perfumed with much incense. No case entrusted to Him can possibly miscarry. In virtue of His intercession, the golden vials are full of odours, “which are the prayers of saints.”† It is every way fearful to be of those who have no part in the Mediator’s intercession, as He declares, “I pray not for the world.” The blood that speaks in God’s ear, claiming acceptance and blessing for the saints, imprecates vengeance upon the enemies of Christ and His people. For those who count it “an unholy thing,” there remains only “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.”‡ To have a part in the Saviour’s intercession, we must believe on His name, for He lives to make intercession only for such as “come unto God by Him;” we must be separate from an evil world, for He prays for those who were given Him of the Father, and “not for the world;” we must be made holy by the renewal of the Spirit, for the incense of His mediation only intermingles with the prayers of saints; and we

\* Jer. vii. 16. See also chap. xi. 14, and xiv. 11.

† Rev. v. 8.

‡ Hebrews x. 27, 29.

must walk in all holy obedience, that our services as well as persons may be presented for acceptance before God. The intercession of our Advocote obtains forgiveness for the manifold sins of our holy things, communicates strength for the performance of all duty, and secures for us constant acceptance. If it is frequently felt to be a high privilege to have fellowship with God's praying people, and if in times of affliction and distress, and while engaged in conflict with the last enemy, the prayers of brethren in Christ are greatly desired, and when enjoyed, are acknowledged to be an unspeakable support and comfort, how inconceivably greater is the privilege of an interest in the continual and all-prevalent intercession of the Saviour in heaven! To have this interest is to be assured of all blessing; and to know that we have it, is the seal and earnest of full deliverance and of future glorious felicity.

*Secondly.* Our hearts should be *with our Advocate and His work in heaven.* As "risen with Christ," we are required to "set our affections on things above;" and we are commanded to seek the things above from the motive, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."\* Chief of those things that are above—the centre of all their glory and the fulness of their excellence—is Christ Jesus Himself, seated as a Priest upon His throne, ever living to plead, and as an exalted King, having all authority and power to bestow the blessings which He asks. There is every thing in the Person and work of the glorious Advocato to engage the frequent loftiest thoughts, fervent desires, and most ardent affections of believers. He is "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand,

\* Col. iii. 1, 2.



and altogether lovely." His compassion is most condescending and tender. His love is beyond compassion—wonderful, gratuitous, eternal, and unchangeable. Having paid the price of His people's redemption in His shed blood, and by Himself purged their sins, He ascended on high, to be engaged for ever without intermission in the great work of making intercession for all whom He died to redeem. To this work they are indebted for the grace of the Spirit, for every good gift in providence which they have received, for all holy privileges, and for all their hopes of future felicity. Knowing all this, how is it possible that a believer can ever be unmindful of that precious High Priest who has entered for him within the veil? \* If his name is on the engravings on His breastplate over His heart and on His shoulder, can there long be out of his thoughts One who has him in His heart perpetually, and who is ever actively employed on his behalf? If the congregation of Israel, assembled in the outer court on the great day of atonement, had chief in their thoughts the high priest who stood before the mercy-seat, engaged in presenting their case and pleading on their behalf; and as they listened to the tinkling of the golden bells on the hem of his garments, waited with fervent desire and affection for His coming forth to bless them, how much more ought we to contemplate the work of our exalted Intercessor in glory! All that should excite our highest and best thoughts, and should attract our most ardent

\* "If He carries our names on His breast, near His heart, as a signal of His affection to us, we should carry His name upon our hearts, in a way of ingenuous return."—*Charnock's Works*, vol. v., p. 144.

spiritual affections, is connected with the intercession of our ever-living High Priest. Should we not therefore regard Him in His sacerdotal office and functions as our Well-beloved, as to us "All and in all;" and as we think of Him, our joy and portion and hope, have our treasure in Him and His work, and our whole heart there also? "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." \*

*Thirdly.* The intercession of Christ *lays us under obligation to be ever prayerful, and to seek to realise continually the blessed fruits of prayer.* The work of our High Priest within the veil is to present the offerings of saints on earth, and these are chiefly their sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving. He pleads for them, who, by faith and prayer, come unto God by Him. He collects in His censer the prayers of all saints, and presents them for acceptance on the altar before God. A sense of our manifold infirmities and necessities should lead us to seek the Spirit's help continually, as the Spirit of grace and supplication, and to pour out our hearts before God, as the Hearer of prayer. "In everything" we are required "to make our requests known to God, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving," if we would be freed from inordinate and distracting care, and have the peace of God keeping our hearts and minds. We have to encounter accusations daily from our own consciences, from Satan, and from the wicked of the world. Our safety and deliverance lie in employing an Advocate, who is ever present in court, who has

\* 1 Pet. i. 8; Ps. lxxiii. 25.

the ear of the Judge, who is skilful to plead our cause, and who is able to silence and condemn every accuser. Our great duty and highest interest is to have recourse to the great Intercessor continually. By renewed acts of faith, we employ Him and trust in Him. By prayer, without ceasing, we put every case that concerns us, and His cause and people, into His hands. If our highest privilege is to “*have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God,*” who “*is passed through the heavens,*” it is for the purpose of constantly employing Him to manage our cause in the court of heaven, and to obtain for us what we need. We can only be made holy in answer to the priestly prayer of the Saviour—“*Sanctify them through Thy truth.*” Oneness with saints in heaven and earth, and communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, can only be realised in answer to His petition, that we “*may be one*” in Him, and with one another, as He and the Father are one; and our entrance at length into heaven will be the answer of His crowning petition—“*Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.*” If Christ’s life in heaven is employed in continual intercession, ours on earth should be one of praying always without fainting. By offering prayers, dictated by the Spirit, in public and private; by short and frequent ejaculatory petitions; by family, social, and intercessory prayer, we should deal always with our blessed Advocate, employing Him in His loved, delightful work, and seeking access through Him to the Father. No offering of old—the least or the greatest—might be laid upon God’s altar but by the hand of the appointed priest, so may we alone hope for Divine favour and acceptance of any petitions

through the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He stands ever ready to receive all who come unto God through Him. His ear is always open to the cry of needy suppliants. This is the only way of audience with the king, and this the open channel of conveying all blessings from the throne. The benefit of employing the heavenly Advocate is surpassingly great; the fruits of His intercession are abundant and precious. We have, in His own word, a double assurance of a full and gracious answer—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."\* If the Saviour presents our persons and prayers with acceptance in heaven, we should live to His glory on earth.

*Fourthly.* The intercession of Christ is a *source of comfort and encouragement* to the saints. A principal design of the Saviour's ascension to heaven was to send "another Comforter" †—"the Spirit of truth," who would abide with His people for ever. This implies that He was Himself on earth, as He will ever be in heaven, a Comforter. He is such in His work of intercession; and the mission of the Spirit, as an abiding and effectual Paraclete, is the fruit of His intercession—"I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter." His grand mediatorial prayer was offered on the eve of His last agony, that His disciples might be filled with consolation—"These things I speak in the world, that ye might have my joy fulfilled in yourselves." ‡ The same design is still carried into accomplishment by the work of the Saviour's advocacy in heaven. There is

\* John xiv. 13, 14.    † John xiv. 16.    ‡ John xvii. 13.



spiritual comfort to God's people in ever having *a suitable Advocate and Intercessor in heaven*. If it affords comfort and joy to a weak, afflicted one to have a Christian friend pleading his cause at the throne of grace, how much greater the consolation to have Him pleading for him in heaven who never changes, who has perfect sympathy for him, and who is fully qualified to render the plea which He presents available! The foundation of our spiritual comfort is that Christ suffered for us, and "by His stripes we are healed." "We joy also in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement."\* The height of joy in God is found in our exalted High Priest—God's eternal Son—taking our case in hand, and pleading it with tender compassion and prevailing efficacy before the throne. As the merit of Christ's death lives perpetually in His intercession, so our interest in it is fitted to dispel all fears and doubts, and to fill us with joy and peace in believing. Depending on the priestly life of our Redeemer in heaven, we are assured that past guilt and sinful infirmities shall not bring believers into condemnation; that accusations of the enemy shall not prevail against them; and, under the strongest temptations, their faith shall not fail; that they shall persevere to the end; their services, however imperfect and defiled, will be accepted; and that at length "everlasting joy," like a garland of beauty, shall crown their heads, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away."† All this is amply guaranteed in the intercession of the High Priest of our profession in heaven. As His whole life is in this, His darling work, so in every possible case of the Christian on

\* ROMANS v. 11.

† ISAIAH xxxv. 10.



earth his name appears on the palms of His hands. In service and sin, in health and sickness, in prosperity and adversity, in life and death, there are comfort and joy unspeakable in Christ's intercession. This comfort and joy arise from the believing contemplation of all the characteristics of the Saviour's work as an Intercessor—from its *earnestness, entire devotedness, and perpetuity*. Appropriately has it been said—"He hath little else to do where He is than to intercede. When on earth He had a glory due to Himself, as the reward of His finished work, and this He sought, intermingling with His prayers for it, suits for His people." But in heaven He realises the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; and now His earnestness and zeal are concentrated in seeking the good things needed by His people. How great the comfort, too, to know that our Advocate *never leaves off pleading for us*. On earth He prayed for all who would believe His word; and, since He entered by His blood within the Holiest of all, and sat down on His throne, He has never ceased interceding for a single moment. We can never come unseasonably to ask for blessings for ourselves or others. We cannot possibly offer in vain the prayers and unutterable groanings which the Spirit dictates; they will never be refused a hearing, or be sent back without an answer. Justly has it been said—"Christ's power cannot be weakened; His eloquence cannot grow dull or flat; His interest is not decayed; the righteousness of God endures for ever. He repents not of His contrivances for man's salvation. He is to this day pleased with the interposition of His Son on our behalf. The laws of heaven are unchangeable; our Advocate is high in

esteem there ; and His thoughts of us are the same as they ever were." \*

There is unspeakable comfort in the *prevalency of Christ's intercession*. The pleadings of the Saviour on earth, though without sin, had in them natural infirmities of the flesh which caused interruption, and were mingled with tears ; but, on His resurrection and ascension to glory, all these infirmities were laid aside for ever. He pleads with prevailing power. The Father does not " withhold from Him whatsoever His lips would crave. His boundless merits establish the highest claims. Every blessing that He seeks for His people He obtains. If He guarantees the bestowal of whatever we ask in His name with a faith weak and imperfect, may we not rest assured that whatsoever He asks in His own name He will obtain?"

Hence, finally, flow *all comfort and joy to God's saints in prayer, and in their hopes in affliction and death*. Their feeblest cries will be heard ; their inexpressible groanings of spirit through the Saviour's intercession will be accepted as efficacious prayers. Their heaviest afflictions and sorrows excite His deepest sympathy. He has ever, as an interceding High Priest, a " fellow-feeling for their infirmities, for He was in all points tempted like as they are, yet without sin." † When they stand in the view of death, and their " flesh and heart faint and fail," their Advocate on high does not fail them. He is " the strength of their heart, and their everlasting portion." He stands at the right hand of the Father, ready to receive their departing spirits. They pass through the swellings of Jordan " as on dry ground," and have

\* Charnock's Works, vol. v., p. 141.

† Heb. iv. 15.

ministered to them "an abundant entrance" into Immanuel's land. The full joy of the heavenly inheritance will be realised chiefly through the perpetual prevalency of the Lord's intercession. By it the memorials of His death are continually in their eye; and they can never forget that they owe all they are and possess to sovereign mercy and redeeming love. This will thrill their hearts with ecstatic joy, and enliven their rapturous praises, as they sing the new song—"Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb." "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to unloose the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood; and hast made us kings and priests to God and the Lamb; and we shall reign upon the earth." \*

\* Rev. v. 9, 10. In reference to Hebrews vii. 25, as samples of the Saviour's intercession, see Isaiah lvii. 1; lxiii. 11; Zechariah i. 12, 14; Psalm lxix. 6, 7—*Bishop Pearson* remarks—"By an humble omnipotency (for it was by His *humiliation* that He obtained *all power*), or *omnipotent humility*, appearing in the presence and presenting His prostrations at the throne of God." "He was not only the offering, but the Priest who offered it. Therefore He is also an Intercessor—His intercession being founded on His voluntary offering of Himself, without spot, to God. We are not only, in virtue of His sacrifice, forgiven, but, in virtue of His intercession, admitted to favour."—*Archbishop Magee on the Atonement*. The declaration, John xvi. 26, "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you," is no contradiction. He does not "pray the Father," as though the Father were unwilling, but *He meets the Father in behalf of men*, as Mediator, in whom the Father is well pleased with man. There was "a perpetual incense before the Lord"—Exodus xxx. 8—unseen by the people, burnt by the high priest; so is Christ's hidden, ever-continuing life of intercession. See *Critical and Experimental Commentary on Hebrews vii. 25*.



✎ As exhibiting clearly the Saviour's Intercession in heaven, and illustrating more fully much that has been advanced in the foregoing Treatise, it is deemed suitable to subjoin the following

## EXPOSITION OF OUR LORD'S GREAT PRIESTLY PRAYER, JOHN XVII.

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### SECTION I.

#### INTRODUCTORY—MANNER AND IMPORTANCE OF THIS PRAYER.

THE Seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John contains the largest recorded prayer which our Lord offered during His personal ministry on earth, and has been justly designated "HIS HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER." It was offered in the presence of His chosen disciples, at the close of the meeting in the upper chamber, and immediately after the celebration of the sacramental feast.\* Of it it has been appropriately said, "The most remarkable prayer followed the most full consoling discourse ever uttered on earth;" † having relation both to His work of expiation and to His intercession, for it was offered

\* There are expositors who regard this prayer as that which our Saviour poured forth in His agony in the garden, alleging that the apostle John gave the full account because he was of the inner circle of apostles, who were with Him in

† Matthew Henry.



in preparation for His great sacrifice, and it is full of intercession. It differs from that prayer which Christ "taught His disciples," which is properly to be entitled "*The Disciple's Prayer*," for in that there are petitions which the Saviour cannot offer for Himself, and in this there are none but He who first uttered it can personally present. In this wonderful prayer there are a solemnity and elevation of thought, a condensed power of expression, and a comprehensiveness of meaning which has filled the minds and exceedingly drawn forth and affected the hearts of the most devoted of God's servants, as it has furnished rich support and consolation to not a few in the hour of death. *Luther* says of it—"This is truly beyond measure a warm and hearty prayer. The Saviour opens the depth of His heart, both in reference to us and to the Father, and He pours them all out. It is so honest, so simple; it is so rich, so wide, so deep, that no man can fathom it." *Melancthon* says of it—"Another holier, more useful, or more pathetic utterance was never made on earth or in heaven." The eminent Scottish Reformer, *John Knox*, had this chapter read to him every day during his last illness, and in the closing scene, the

the garden. But it is evident that the prayer in Gethsemane was generally addressed to God the Father in silence, whereas this was spoken in the audience of His disciples. This, besides, gives no expression to the words twice repeated, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And, moreover, from the opening words of chapter xviii. it appears plain that this prayer was ended before the Saviour and His apostles crossed the brook Kedron, and entered the precincts of the garden. There is none of the "strong crying and tears" in the offering up of this prayer that characterised the Saviour's pleadings when His soul-agony had begun.

verses that were read from it consoled and animated him in the last conflict. \*

The evangelist, in a few brief but most expressive introductory words, records the Saviour's posture and frame of mind as He began this prayer—" *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.*" His eyes were withdrawn from all earthly objects, and directed with steadfast gaze to the heavens, indicating that His whole thoughts and affections were concentrated in heaven, that He had all expectation and confidence in the Father, and that now, in the full view of dread sufferings, He was longing with intense desire to go to that blissful abode to which from eternity He belonged. †

The Saviour's prayer on the occasion was spoken in audible words—" *He said.*" The narrative of the inspired penman is not description merely, but the very words which the Saviour uttered, as He directed His eyes heavenwards. He might have expressed the desires of His heart in mental prayer, but He gave utterance to them in words, that His disciples might be assured of the place which they had in His warmest affections, and of His pleading with the Father on their behalf. ‡

\* Dr. A. C. Thompson, "The Mercy-Seat."

† "Our Lord might have offered this prayer in silence, or secretly, but He wished to present Himself to the Father as a suppliant, remembering that He was our Teacher. Wherefore He hath made known to us the prayer which He offered for us, for the edification of His disciples, and of us who read the record."—*Augustine*. "Who does not rejoice that those things which Jesus spake with the Father stand on record still?"—*Bengel*.

‡ "By this act, indeed, Christ testified that, in the affection of His mind, He was rather in heaven than on earth; and thus having left all men behind, He held a familiar colloquy with God."—*Calvin*.

This minute account of the position and circumstances in which the Redeemer offered His great priestly prayer is given for our instruction and edification. Herein has He left us an example that we should follow His steps. As His eyes were lifted up to heaven when He spake the words of the prayer, so the gesture we take and the utterance may help to fix the thought and quicken the affections which are the life of prayer. And thus, too, may suitable expression be given to the spiritual service, in abstraction of thought, deep humility, devotion of heart, and godly reverence. With desires purified and heavenward, we are taught to draw near, as in prayer we pour out our hearts before Him.

In our Lord's prayer, we have stated, in the most plain and explicit terms, the address and the prayer, containing various petitions and pleas to enforce them, and the conclusion. The address, repeated with enlargement throughout the prayer, is to His Father. The exalted object of worship is viewed as His Father, as He is elsewhere entitled "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Saviour stands to Him in the relation of His eternal Son, and as Mediator. He is the Head and Representative of His redeemed people. One with the Father in nature, and in design and affection, the Saviour, in presenting this prayer in the commencement, and throughout every part to the close, pleads His unity of essence and perfection with the Father, and at the same time His oneness of love, confidence, and submission to Him. With the whole soul, the eternal Son rests and delights in the Father, as God-man, Mediator. He fully acquiesces in the covenant-relation, with respect to all that He was called to suffer, and in assured confidence in the

wisdom, power, and love of His God and Father that He would obtain whatever He sought from Him. Thus, too, are we taught, by His all-perfect example, to draw near to God “with all holy reverence and confidence as children to a father,” ever able and ready to help and bless. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus is our God and Father too, and will ever stand to us in these blessed relations. When He had finished His work on earth, and was about to enter into His glory, He said—“I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God and your God.” Let us ever know that the spirit of all right prayer, as well as our encouragement in asking, lies in realising all filial relation and affection to our heavenly Father. The “spirit of adoption” is at once the disposition and the matter of all acceptable prayer. By it “we cry, Abba, Father.” \*

\* It is appropriately remarked by *Newton*—“This prayer of our Saviour is very full. It is for Himself, the Head of the Church, and it is for the church which is His body, of which alone He is the Saviour and Intercessor. It is for the present church—it is for the church to come. It is for the apostles and the ministers—the officers and teachers of the church; and it is for the ordinary members of the church, who believe through their words. So that whoever appertaineth to the church, let him live in what time he will, be he of whatever condition or estate he will, he hath a share in this prayer.”—*Newton*, “An Exposition with Notes, unfolded and applied, on John xvii.”

The pious printer and publisher *Perthes* is said, during the two last months of his life, to have lived on the four chapters, John xiv., xv., xvi., and xvii. “The nearer he approached to death, the oftener did he read the xviith.”



## SECTION II.

### MATTER OF THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYER.

THE *matter* of the Redeemer's prayer is threefold:—1, It is a *prayer for Himself*; 2, *For His apostles and the ministers of the Word*; and 3, *For all who believe on Him through the apostle's word*, or for the *Universal Church*. For each of these there were offered appropriate petitions, and these were enforced by suitable pleas or arguments.

The prayer is, first of all, PERSONAL—for Himself; and secondly, It is *intercessory*. The petitions for Himself are much briefer than those which He presented for His people—the former being only *two*, or, rather, but one, variously expressed or expounded; while the latter are a number, earnestly urged, with a variety of weighty pleas. This arrangement and division of the matter of the prayer justify the view which has not unfrequently been taken of our Lord's last priestly prayer: that it was throughout *intercessory*, and the substance and model of that intercession which He continually makes in heaven, as our great High Priest, on the footing of His finished sacrifice.\* This, indeed, may be considered as the grand and prominent character of the prayer in every

\* It is observed by *Stier* ("Words of the Lord Jesus")—"He prayed thus in testimony how He would hereafter intercede for, and represent them, in heaven." *Dr. John Pye Smith* takes the same view—"The prayer recorded in John xvii. may, I conceive, be regarded as designed to represent, in the general and comprehensive idea, the intercession of our Lord."



part of the substance and matter of it. It is throughout the Saviour's intercessory prayer for the church of the redeemed. When He prays for Himself, it is for Him as the Head of the Church. His prayers for the apostles and disciples then present were for the ministers of the Word, who were already called and sanctified; and the concluding petitions were for those who were hereafter to be called, and should believe through the preaching of the gospel—for the members of the future church, till the end of time; and for them in life and death.

Our Lord's prayer for Himself is expressed in a double form—the one in verse 1st—"Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." And again, in verse 5th, the same petition is presented, accompanied with a reference to the work which He had completed, and with a statement of the special way in which He sought and expected to be glorified—"Now, O Father, glorify me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." The grand subject of the Saviour's prayer for Himself was not His own glory, but the glorification of His Father. The great end of Jehovah in all the manifestations which He has made of Himself, and in all His dispensations, is His own glory, and its acknowledgment by all His rational and accountable creatures.\* All holy beings—angels and saints of mankind, seek God's glory as the chief end of their existence and preservation; and the higher their advancement and moral perfection, the more do they regard it with absorbing interest and desire. Our Lord, in His whole undertaking on earth, and especially in His last sufferings, set this ever before

\* See Edwards' "*God's Last End in Creation.*"

Him as His principal end and aim. He came to be about His Father's business. He sought not His own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him. In His last agonising sufferings, He wholly submitted Himself to the Father's good pleasure; and, in entire resignation of spirit, He exclaimed, as He drank to the dregs the embittered cup, "Not my will, but Thine be done." His supreme desire was always that "by His suffering obedience God in all things might be glorified." \* The glorification of the Father is the display of the excellences of His character, as the true God, and the God of salvation; the bright exhibition of His justice, holiness, truth, and mercy; and the magnifying of His love and the principles of His moral government. This is eminently done by the Redeemer in a twofold way—1, In His appointment and designation to the highest office of authority, in order to confer eternal life on His people; and 2, By the work which He accomplished on earth. The Saviour seeks to glorify the Father in conforming to His Surety-appointment. The words in verse 2 indicate the manner, "Inasmuch as," or "according as" "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." A people was chosen from all eternity and given into Christ's hand to be redeemed, and to be the "many sons" to be brought to glory. They were chosen to eternal life, with all the means thereof. And Christ Jesus,

\* "The principle of His inward life was a simple, quiet, fundamental purpose, born out of free-hearted love, to do the will of God. Without uniting Himself to God unreservedly, feeling Himself to be perfectly one with God, to have no objects different from His, He could not have lived."—*Ullman on the Sinlessness of Jesus.*

that He might without fail bring every one that was given Him to its full possession, was invested by the Father with power and authority over all flesh. He was set King on Zion, His holy hill, from all everlasting. He was designated to universal sovereign Headship in the plan and purpose of the covenant. His dominion was to be over all flesh,—angels and men. It was over sinful and wicked persons and authorities, to restrain and bring them down; over all flesh, corrupt and rebellious, to subdue and renew it or to consume it in the day of His anger. Over the whole human race He has rightful authority. He controls all movements and events, so as to render them conducive to the advancement of the Divine glory. The original expression is anomalous and peculiar, but singularly expressive. “As to everything which Thou hast given Him, He might give to them eternal life; and this is life eternal.” According as the Mediator has administered this high dominion from the beginning, has He glorified the Father, and all His perfections and government. The exercise of His royal Headship will bring a revenue of boundless glory to Him throughout the universe, on to the end of time and for evermore.

The eternal life, which the Saviour was exalted to supreme power and authority to confer upon the elect, is to “know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.” The object of this knowledge is the Father and the Son—one in nature and the same in power and glory. It is not said that this knowledge is *the means of, or the way to, life eternal*; it does *not bring it, but is life eternal*. “This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in

His Son." "This is the true God, and eternal life." \*

The beginning of eternal life, in actual possession, is in the Spirit imparting the saving knowledge of Christ.† "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."‡ This is *transforming*, as it conforms us to the moral likeness of God in Christ; and the increase of the Divine life in the soul, and the full perfect knowledge of God in Christ, are complete felicity. Conscious acquaintance with God Himself, as the living and true God—the God of salvation, and with Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh, is the life and happiness of the redeemed in time and throughout eternity. The Saviour, exalted to supreme dominion, and in the exercise of His high power and authority, bestows eternal life by imparting the knowledge of Himself, and of God who sent Him; thus He glorifies the Father, and so fulfils His highest desires and the great purpose of His mediatorial appointment.

The Saviour reflects with satisfaction on what He had already done for the glorification of the Father, and uses this as an argument for enforcing His petition—"I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." He came into the world as a Substitute for sinners,

\* 1 John v. 11, 20.

† *Neander* says—"Intuition and life coincide in the Divine." "The vision of God is the whole of eternal life."—*Augustine*. "To know God, to have experience of His graciousness, is the very participation of Him; and life results from the participation of God."—*Frenæus*.

‡ 2 Corinthians iv. 6.



to obey the law which they had violated, and to suffer the penalty of their transgressions. This, the great work that was given Him to do, He performed in the highest exercise of all holy graces; and, from the dignity of His person, He “magnified the law, and made it honourable.” This work was now on the point of being completed by His obedience unto death; and He speaks of it as if it were actually finished. By the truth which He taught, by His miracles of power, by the perfect example which He exhibited, and by the attractive graces displayed in all His actions and sufferings on earth, He glorified the Father. He brought to His perfections, law, and government a revenue of glory vastly greater than man could have done, if he had not sinned, or than angels of the highest rank could ever render. On this ground, as He reflected upon all He had done and suffered in accomplishing the great end for which He came into the world, and viewed with complacency His work of Surety-obedience—now all but finished, He prayed with peculiar emphasis of supplication—“Father, glorify Me, as I have glorified Thee on earth.” It is as if He had said—“I alone, of all that are partakers of human nature on earth—where Thou hast been generally and unspeakably dishonoured—I have ever glorified Thee here, in full accordance with Thy will, and in all the work to which Thou didst appoint Me. Now, therefore, glorify Me in dying the death, and in heaven, that I may more abundantly glorify Thee for ever.”

The Father glorified the Son in His obedience and sufferings on earth, by sustaining His human nature in fulfilment of the covenant-stipulation; by giving Him the Spirit without measure, enabling to work miracles of power, and to manifest the perfect exer-



cise of all holy graces; by the ministry of angels; by the testimonies borne from heaven, and by enemies; and by mighty wonders in nature and providence. All this done by the Father to the Son, in whom He was ever well pleased, was returned by the Mediator persevering in His undertaking to the end, in the spirit He manifested, and in bringing in all things the highest honour and glory to the Divine perfections, and character, and government.

This declaration and plea of the Head are designed for all the members. We, too, should be able to declare of our work and trials in the world—"I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." We are sent into the world to be servants of God. A special work is assigned to each servant, which he should try to ascertain. His constant concern should be to glorify God by performing it, and finishing it according to Divine prescription and requirement. Thus only may we expect the glory reserved for the faithful when all earthly labours shall have been finished.

The petition which the Saviour presents for Himself is again stated with greater fulness and enlargement, and as the appropriate conclusion of the plea which He had just urged. Since He had glorified the Father on earth, and had finished the work assigned Him, He asks, as the due reward of His obedience—"Now, O Father, glorify Me." With all earnestness and the strongest affection, He pleads the paternal relation; and referring to the work which He had already done for promoting His glory, He prays that He may yet further be glorified, in order that He may bring a much greater return of glory to the Father throughout all future ages for ever. The glory which He thus seeks may refer to

His *sufferings* and *death* near at hand. In bearing Him through the dread ordeal, so that He would not fail or be discouraged, He gave the highest testimony to Him as His well-beloved Son and elect Servant, in whom His soul delighted. He brought into the brightest manifestation all the graces of His character, and He displayed Him as the "Captain of salvation," consecrated and "made perfect through sufferings." The acceptance of His finished work attested that the Lord was well pleased for His righteousness' sake; and that while His law was magnified and made honourable, Jesus became the "Author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him."

But chiefly the glorification which the Saviour sought was that to which He was to be admitted in heaven, after His great sacrifice had been fully offered, and He had ascended to sit at the Father's right hand. He asks—"Glorify Me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." This plainly implies His essential Godhead, and His co-equality with the Father. His person is the same in its *three states*—before the world was, on earth, and in heaven. The pristine glory which the Son had with the Father had been voluntarily veiled or laid aside for a time, and He "emptied" Himself of it for an important purpose. When that purpose was served in His abasement and sufferings, He sought to return to the glorious place whence He came, and to which He ever belonged. The glory of the Mediator, when He was set up from everlasting, was not received by Him, but He always possessed it. He *had* it with the Father "before the world was." He was glorified with this original glory, when He was raised up with power, enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and

systems and powers opposed to the laws of His kingdom, and to take to Him His great power to reign. The Father has been glorifying the Son from the time of His atoning death, when He finished the work of His Surety-undertaking; and He will yet glorify Him still more, as "the last times" approach when the eternal purpose for the display of the Mediator's glory shall be fully effected. Then shall "His name be great among the Gentiles; and incense and a pure offering shall be given Him from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." "The Lord shall be King over all the earth: there shall be one Lord, and His name one." "His name shall endure for ever: it shall be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed. Let the whole earth be filled with His glory: Amen, and Amen."\*

Christ will be glorified as the final *Judge of angels and men*. This is according to the eternal purpose of Jehovah, for "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained."† He shall come to judgment in power and great glory. He will appear in His glory as the Son of God. He shall come in His own and His Father's glory. He has peculiar fitness also to be Judge, because He is the Son of man. As He sits upon the tribunal of judgment, He displays in the brightest manifestation all Divine perfections, and He vindicates all the rights and claims of Godhead. He is seen in the full effulgence of His mediatorial character, as this

\* Malachi i. 11; Zechariah xiv. 9; Psalm lxxii. 17, 18, 19.  
See *Gardner Spring* on the "Glory of Christ."

† Acts xvii. 31.

will be the last act of His mediatorial dominion on earth. The *manner* of the Saviour's coming to judgment will be transcendantly illustrious. He will come in His own glory, and in the glory of the Father, with His mighty angels. The last judgment will be "the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ," the "glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour." The whole process of the final judgment will be a signal and unparalleled display of the Saviour's glory. The innumerable multitude gathered around the "great white throne,"—the quick and the dead, small and great—all the countless millions of the human race, compearing to give each an individual account, and to "receive the deeds done in the body"—the ministry of angels in separating the righteous from the wicked—the righteous placed at the right hand of the Judge, and taken to be assessors with Him in judgment, and the wicked arising to shame and everlasting contempt—all these proclaim in the loudest language the transcendant glory of the Judge. And the final issues of the last judgment, in the reception of the redeemed to the heavenly kingdom, and in consigning the wicked to everlasting fire, "prepared for the devil and his angels,"—in the dissolution of the material universe, and the delivering up of the mediatorial kingdom, and in the appearance of the new heavens and earth, wherein will for ever dwell righteousness, will exhibit Christ glorified to an amazing degree. In the reign of eternity, too, which the judgment day introduces, the Son of God will be glorified beyond the highest conceptions of men and angels. Then will be fully displayed "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Himself the happiness of all the glorified inhabitants



of heaven, He will be the Dispenser of all its blessedness, the object of the profound adoration, and praise of saints made perfect and of holy angels—the Alpha and Omega of all their glory and felicity. In new manifestations of His excellency for ever, and in the ever-expanding increased capacities of the redeemed through eternal ages to see and appreciate this excellency, the petition of the Saviour, “Glorify Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,” is fully answered.

The emphatic *pleas* by which the petition is enforced show the certainty of it being heard and answered, and also that the glorifying of the Son will be the eternal glorification of the Father. These pleas are, “Father,” “the hour is come,” “Thou hast given Him power over all flesh,” and “I have glorified Thee on the earth.” Because He stood in the most endearing relation to the Father, and the appointed time for granting the request was come; because all power in heaven and earth had been given Him for the purpose of conferring eternal life on all the saved, and all necessary preparations had been already made, in the work of the Saviour on earth, therefore does the Redeemer ask with full confident expectation that He may be glorified in His death, in what succeeds in His ascension to heaven, and in His reign to the end of time and throughout eternity. These pleas are irresistible and all-prevalent. “He was heard in that He feared.” When “He desired life, it was given Him, even such a length of days that He should live for ever.” The glory which the Redeemer sought was indispensably necessary, that He might save with an everlasting salvation those who were given Him in the covenant. Eternal life is only through Christ Jesus, glorified as



a perfect and accepted sacrifice in death; and again glorified, as He is seated on His mediatorial throne invested with all power in heaven and earth. The knowledge of the Father and the Son, which is the essence of eternal life, is the knowledge of "the glory of God in the face of Christ." To give this to one sinner, equally as to the innumerable company of saved ones, requires infinite merit, unbounded power and authority, and unchangeable perfection on the part of Him who confers it. This glory bestowed on the Son is the grand way of glorifying God throughout the universe in all ages of time and in eternity. According as it is displayed, all the transcendent perfections of God's character, all the excellences of His moral government, are illustriously manifested; all darkness is dispelled; all enmity and opposition are brought down; the material creation is clothed with more than pristine beauty and splendour; the Lord Jehovah rejoices in all His works. And the moral world, in which apostacy and sin have long had place, shall reflect in dazzling lustre the likeness of its glorious Author for ever. When the Mediator, in the last wondrous act of His administration, shall have delivered up the kingdom, having put down all authority and rule, God in Trinity—the God of salvation, will be all and in all. With what lofty encouragement should we join in the Saviour's prayer for Himself! How earnestly should we ask for ourselves that we should glorify Christ in all that we think and do, that thus we may the more effectually do all to the glory of God!

### SECTION III.

#### PRAYER FOR THE APOSTLES AND MINISTERS OF THE WORD—JOHN XVII. 6-19.

WE have already seen that the Saviour's last priestly prayer is properly divisible into three parts—1, His prayer for Himself; 2, for His apostles and ministers; and 3, for all believers, or for His universal church. Throughout the whole there is observable unity of design, and the strictest harmony in the connection of the different parts, all in subordination to the one great end. The grand desire of the Saviour, in view of accomplishing His work, was that God's glory might be eminently promoted; that all He was to do and suffer might contribute to this; that His ministers, as instruments appointed and sent forth by Him, might carry forward the same work; and that the whole church might be so united to Christ and to one another, that God might be glorified in the highest degree and to the utmost extent. The two last parts of the prayer are chiefly intercessory, and are much fuller and more particular in respect of the petitions offered, and the pleadings by which they are enforced. Justly have they been regarded as the substance of the perpetual intercession of the Saviour in heaven, and as exhibiting the great matters that concern the safety and salvation of those for whom He intercedes; and the spirit and manner of His priestly prayers which He offers for them continually. It is observable, besides, that whereas in the Saviour's prayer for Himself He seeks the glorification of the Father, in those for His

apostles and the church, He has regard to His own glory as well as the glory of the Father; He asks blessings for them because He is glorified in them; and when, in the end, He prays that they may be finally with Him, it is that they may behold *His* glory. Those petitions and pleas show not only the beautiful unity and harmony of the prayer, but they also declare most clearly that the Father and the Son are equal in power and Godhead. It cannot but be considered the most fearful presumption and blasphemy in any creature, however exalted, to speak of his glory equally as God's being promoted by the preservation and salvation of the redeemed, and to represent the sharing of this glory in heaven as the great end of all previous Divine dealings towards them in providence and grace.

The second part of the prayer, which is by far the largest and fullest, extending from verse 6th to the 19th inclusive, has respect to a particular class which, because of their relation to the Redeemer and the church, is of chief importance. This has been regarded by some as being exclusively the apostles, whom He had chosen and called, and who were designed for a special work—the infallible teaching of His will, and the establishment of His kingdom in the world.\* There is evidence, we think, sufficient in

\* This is the opinion of the late Dr. *Brown* of Edinburgh, in his "*Exposition of Our Lord's Intercessory Prayer*." He assigns some plausible reasons for this view. Yet when he declares positively that "this is a prayer not directly either for Christians generally or for Christian ministers, but for the holy apostles of our Lord Jesus, in whose presence and hearing, and for whose spiritual establishment and comfort it was offered," he is constrained to admit that "There is no doubt that much of what is said of them is true of all right Christian ministers, and indeed of all genuine Christians, and that

the expressions which the Saviour employs to show that His prayer is not to be thus limited. The blessings which He sought concern not only the apostles, but likewise all the official servants whom He called, and the whole company of the redeemed. Those for whom He prays are represented as being given of the Father to the Saviour, as separated from the world, and enjoying privileges denied to others. And in verse 20th, when He says—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for those also which believe on Me through their word," the declaration must be taken to refer not only to the few petitions which follow toward the close of the prayer, but likewise to all the intercession that goes before. It may be at once admitted that the pleadings in this part of the Saviour's prayer had a *primary reference* to the apostles who were present, whose hearts He aimed to comfort; and that as depositories of His doctrine, and sent by Him into the world to communicate His truth, He had a special regard to them. But as the chief features of character and qualifications which He specified belong to others too, and the work in which they are employed is likewise performed by others, it would appear obvious that the subjects of this intercession should include a larger number than those whom the Saviour selected to be His personal attendants, and whom He commissioned to establish His kingdom in the earth. In our apprehension, our Lord's intercessions here—while referring in the first

blessings of the same kind are given to both these classes in answer to the Saviour's prayer."—"On the Lord's Intercessory prayer," p. 82. Accepting, as we do fully, Dr. Brown's admission, we agree with *Newton* and some other expositors in thinking that this second part of our Lord's prayer refers to all Christ's ministers as well as to the apostles.



instance to His apostles—are presented also for their genuine successors in all future time—the faithful ministers of the gospel and pastors of the church, and do not exclude from a share in the benefits sought those who believe on His name through the ministry of the word. It is only by taking the expressions in this comprehensive application that we can estimate aright their full weight and importance, and that the petitions which the Saviour offered, considered as being those substantially of His continual intercession in heaven, are felt to be of such unspeakable value to His servants at all times. While all believers may derive support and comfort from them, to ministers of the word especially they will ever be found, amid their arduous labours, and trials, and conflicts, fraught with assurances of gracious help, protection, and strong consolation.

Regarding, then, this part of our Lord's intercessory prayer as designed principally for His apostles and for future ministers of the gospel, we notice briefly the chief matters specifically contained in it. These are the *persons* for whom the prayer is offered, the *characters* by which they are represented, the *petitions* presented on their behalf, and *the particular pleas or arguments* by which each separate petition is enforced.

The persons prayed for are designated as a particular class—"I pray for them, and not for the world." They are styled "Thine," the Father's, "given" to Christ, and belonging to Him and the Father. For them the Saviour asks conservation and special Divine keeping, fulness of the Spirit's joy, and full consecration, with perfect holiness. Both in the description of the objects of the prayer, and the expanded words of the separate petitions,



there are the most appropriate pleas expressed why the blessings sought from the Father should be conferred. Our blessed Advocate ever knows where to find the Head of the Covenant, the Hearer of prayer; and as He comes even to His seat, He orders His cause before Him, and "fills his mouth with arguments." \*

The *objects* of the Saviour's prayer. These are described by distinct characteristics and by distinguishing privileges. They are represented as separate from the world, as the peculiar property of the Father, as given to Christ as objects of common interest in regard to the Father and the Son, having Christ's name manifested to them, believing in His mission and work, and as keeping His word. This variety of description is employed both to declare the peculiar relations and the special privileges of those for whom Christ prayed, and of such as enjoy the benefits that flow from His intercession. They are mentioned, too, as furnishing effectual pleas why the blessings sought for should be conferred upon them.

1. *They belong to the Father.* "Thine they were." Not only as creatures, but as they were first in His love and chosen before the foundation of the world; as being regenerate they are His workmanship—His "portion," "peculiar treasure," and the "lot of His inheritance;" and as apostles and ministers, they were designated from eternity to a sacred office, to which in time they are called and ordained. They stand in a peculiar relation to the Son as well as to the Father. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Chosen of the Father,

\* Job xxiii. 3, 4.

they were given into Christ's hand to be redeemed. The Mediator in the covenant willingly accepted the donation, undertook to be their Surety, and to present them at last before the Father with exceeding great joy. Ministers, as selected ones, were given to the Redeemer as instruments for the advancement of His glory in the earth. They are among the chief of the ascension-gifts which He received as He entered into His glory, that He might afterwards give them even "to the rebellious," that "God the Lord might dwell among them."\* In becoming the Saviour's, they did not cease to be the Father's, for it is declared, "*All mine are thine, and thine are mine.*" In giving them to Christ, the Father neither relinquished His property nor work in them. This includes *things* as well as *persons*. This could not possibly be said by any mere creature, however exalted. The "all" that is the Father's includes the fulness of the Godhead, and this dwells "bodily" or *substantially* in the Son. It inhabits His humanity, consisting of a true body and a rational soul. As Mediator, all things and persons are committed by the Father into His hands. When He receives this high trust, He manages it so that all shall as much as before be to the honour and glory of Him who gave it. In the language of an early Christian father,† "We are not to suppose that they are less the Father's because they are His, or are less His because they are the Father's."

2. Then, they were given to the Son "*out of the world,*" and for them so given He specially prays, and "*not for the world.*" The *world* from which the redeemed are taken, and for which the Saviour does not

\* Ps. lxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8.

† Chrysostom.

pray, is the mass of mankind, viewed as fallen and unchanged, lying in unbelief and depravity. Originally, whether regarded as redeemed or chosen ones, they were *in* the world and not *of* it. But through the atoning death of the Saviour they were delivered from this present evil world; and by the work of the Spirit they are brought out and become separated, no longer to be conformed to the customs and spirit of the world—to be henceforth witnesses against its wickedness, and to overcome it by faith.

3. They are, moreover, distinguished by *peculiar privileges* which Christ confers upon them, and by *peculiar service* which they render to Him. “I have manifested to them Thy name.” “I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me.” And, “They have kept the words which Thou gavest me, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me.” Again, “They have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee.” The “name” of the Father is His supreme power and authority, as the Head of the Covenant—the God of salvation. This Christ manifests to the redeemed, in His person and work on earth, and perpetually to His servants by the word of the gospel, and by the work of His Spirit. This was His great work on earth. “The only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, full of grace and truth, He hath declared Him.” “He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.” This is His continual work, as He is still present in the church and the world by His Spirit. As He reveals the Father in the word, and shines into men’s hearts, He gives “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.” The “words”

which the Father gave to Christ, and which He communicated to His disciples, are all the revelation which He made of Himself—the doctrines and promises of the covenant—the truths of God's salvation, which, as the great Prophet, He came to reveal. These the apostles and chosen servants received into their hearts and minds. Their understandings were opened, so that they consciously felt the evidence of the truth, and embraced the word as vital and saving. Especially by the teaching of the Spirit, they were brought to know "surely that Christ came forth from the Father," and to "believe that the Father did send Him." By faith they accredited the truth made known on a Divine testimony; they believed the doctrine as Divine; they embraced the Saviour as the Messenger and the message. They had, moreover, a spiritual knowledge derived from experience. They knew God in Christ as the substance of the gospel; and theirs was a knowledge of full and indubitable certainty. In that wherein the world was profoundly ignorant of Him, and rejected Him, they had the full assurance of understanding. They received and embraced the Saviour as coming forth in His mission "God manifest in the flesh," "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." The clear indication that these were saved ones, and servants chosen to make known Divine truth is, that "they have kept thy word." They "continued" in the Father's word, which the Son had given them. They laid it up in their hearts, conformed their lives to it, and walked in it in the way of holy and universal obedience.

While these characteristics belong in some measure to all true Christians, they are specially the marked features of all approved faithful ministers of the



gospel. They must, like the apostles, be chosen and called by Christ. The only true *apostolic succession* is here. Ministers must ever be the Father's—chosen and consecrated, and given to Christ, as instruments for advancing His glory. To them the Son must manifest the Father's name. His words which He has taught them they must receive and embrace. They must believe with the heart the Son, and His mission as Mediator. They must keep the words of the Father and the Son; and, with the assurance of experimental knowledge and confidence of faith, they are to go and make known God's light and salvation to the world.\* For persons possessed of this character, and distinguished by such a work, our blessed Intercessor pleads continually before the Father. In the upper chamber, surrounded by the apostles whom He had chosen, He presented in prayer the case of His servants so called, and taught and trained thus far; and now He pleads for them in relation to the future. In doing so, He regards them as representative men, pleading in the petitions which follow for all ministers of the word. These are ever to regard themselves as having the deepest interest in those petitions of the blessed Advocate, and should feel the unspeakable value and importance of having them heard and answered on their behalf. When in verse 9th the Saviour says—"I pray for them, I pray not for the world," it is observable that the original term which He uses denotes *praying not as a suppliant*, but as a *claimant*. He asks as a friend, speaking to the Father face to face. As Jehovah's Shepherd—the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—He asks *concerning* His loved flock.

\* *Newton*, p. 183.



They are the peculiar subjects of His intercession; and, as they are the Father's as well as His, there is the strongest ground of assurance that His prayer for them will be graciously heard and fully answered. The petitions which the Saviour offers for His apostles and ministers are most weighty and comprehensive, and are enforced by the most powerful arguments. They are such as ministers should ever offer for themselves; and those who seek benefit from the ministry for themselves and others should frequently offer these petitions. The answer to these prayers would raise the ministry to the highest character, and would render it effective of blessing to the world. The Saviour asks for His apostles and ministers—1, Preservation from the evil of the world; 2, His joy fulfilled in them; 3, Consecration and sanctification through the truth; and 4, Union in faith and heart.

*First. Preservation from evil.* Verse 11th—"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." Again, verse 18th—"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The object of the petition is styled "Holy Father," expressive of His fidelity in the covenant. The Son had engaged to redeem those that were given Him by the Father. It is the part of the Father to keep, by His mighty power and by all the resources of His kingdom, those for whom the ransom was paid, that they might enjoy the purchased inheritance. As He is "glorious in holiness," His honour is concerned that none of them should perish, and that they should enjoy the promised reward. Believers are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," unto the inheritance reserved for them in heaven. God swore by His holiness in the covenant,

and this pledges Him to rescue and preserve from an evil world all His servants. "Through His own name" He keeps them, especially "from the evil." "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The apostles were kept, by Divine care and protection, amid the numerous enemies and dangers with which they were surrounded. They were preserved in perils frequent and many; and with the concentrated malice and power of evil spirits and human wickedness arrayed against them, they were kept till the work assigned them was accomplished. Ministers of the gospel, above all others, need conservation from the evil of the world.\* They are called to come out and be separate; and if they would be found faithful, and do the work of the sacred office, they must avoid association with worldly men; they should not take part in worldly politics, or cherish the spirit of the world. They should not fear the enmity or reproach or contempt of the world. They should habitually live above it, and overcome by faith the pleasures, profits, and fame of the world. It is only Divine power that can preserve Christ's servants in the way of holding fast the profession of their faith. Hence the Saviour asks—"Keep them through Thine own name"—which may mean that God's servants shall be kept by Divine power as objects of special care, and by means Divinely

\* The original term may be either taken in the masculine or neuter gender. The preservation sought may be either from the *evil one*—Satan and his instruments, or from *the evil thing*—sin and its power and effects. There is every reason to think that the expression is to be taken in the widest sense, denoting evil of every kind as it exists, and with which they might expect to come in contact in the world.

provided. Rather, in accordance with the original phrase "*in Thy name,*" keep them in the knowledge and confession of God's covenant name. Make them faithful in the acknowledgment of God's names, titles, truths, and ordinances, that thus God's name may be there glorified on earth.

The Saviour's pleas are singularly appropriate and cogent. As if He were already standing at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, He pleads, as the High Priest within the veil, with the same earnest loving pleas that He will ever present. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name." As Mediator, He had fulfilled His commission and Surety-undertaking; as their Master, He had tenderly kept His servants; preserved them according to the covenant; defended them from all evil, suffering for them, and ready to die for them. At all times He had kept them in the Father's "name," in the knowledge and profession of His covenant character, and of His truth and salvation. Reiterating with evident satisfaction the pleas, He says—"Those that Thou gavest Me, I have kept." He uses, as if with designed emphasis, a stronger word than before—"I have guarded"—kept with a military garrison.\* It was befitting, when He was about to be taken away, that He should commit them to the Father's care, who equally loved them. The plea implies that He and the Father engaged in this work were of equal power and dignity. The additional statement in this plea—"None of them is lost," declares His faithfulness and success as Mediator. His work has not failed. Notwithstanding the power of evil and their weakness, not one of those who were given

\* Henry's Commentary, p. 769.

to Christ of the Father to be saved, has been lost or has perished. When He excepts "*the son of perdition*," this does not include Judas—"the utterly lost one"—in the number of those who were given Him. The words strictly rendered are, "None of them is lost. But the son of perdition is lost." The fall of the traitor did not frustrate the Divine plan. It was the fulfilment of prophecy; and while it was in no sense a falling from grace—which Judas never had—it was permitted for the most important purposes, both in relation to God's glory, and to the good of all faithful ministers. How supporting and consoling the assurance that Christ never loses one of His true servants—that they are ever kept in Jehovah's name, and none can pluck them out of His or His Father's hands.

*Secondly.* Another subject of Christ's prayer for His ministers is, that they may show *His joy* and have it "fulfilled" in them. "These things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in them," verse 13. The "things" referred to may mean the words which He had just addressed to the Father in this prayer, as He had already in the discourse in the upper chamber spoken to them gracious promises and cheering expectations, that their "joy might be full."\* His words of intercession were now uttered, while He was yet in the world, in the hearing of the apostles, that they might have their sorrow dispelled, and be filled with holy and abounding joy. The knowledge of His perpetual intercession for them in heaven is a special means of filling ministers and all believers with spiritual joy. The Saviour's joy, that is peculiarly His, arises from the

\* John xv. 11.



view of His work finished, of the glory of Godhead thereby promoted, of multitudes—the travail of His soul—converted and saved, and of all the glorious results of His atonement. The Saviour would not only have His servants safe in eternity; He would have them happy and blessed here. He is the source of all their joys. He shares His with them now, and receives them at length to the joy of their Lord, when the service is completed, and their trials and sorrows are for ever ended. The possession of this joy is of unspeakable importance to ministers. It is a “fruit of the Spirit,” and a special effect of faith. The joy of the Lord is their true “strength” for all labour, and their support and comfort in all trial and conflict. As they are “filled with joy and peace in believing,” they “abound in hope, according to the power of the Holy Ghost.”\* When they have *restored* to them the “joy of God’s salvation,” they then teach sinners God’s way, and are made instrumental in turning them to God.† In many ways Christ Jesus fills His ministering servants with His joy. He does this by making them to hear “the joyful sound” of the gospel, and employing them to proclaim it to others. He gives them exceeding great and precious promises, and brings them to ordinances, that they may “draw water with joy from wells of salvation.” He makes them “joyful in the house of prayer,” gives them gracious discoveries of Himself and of the covenant, sends the Comforter to dwell in them, works for them great deliverances, and imparts to them foretastes of heaven. All these things are spoken that Christ’s servants might possess their Master’s joy, and have

\* Romans xv. 13.

† Psalm li. 12, 13.



it increased and perfected in them. But, in an especial manner, the knowledge of the Saviour's intercession on their behalf is fitted to fill them with the purest and most satisfying joy. That they have One so pre-eminently qualified to manage successfully their cause, and ever engaged in pleading for them, should relieve all their sorrows, and inspire them with gladness of heart. This should comfort and encourage them under all opposition of enemies, and accusations laid in against them from whatever quarter. Notwithstanding their infirmity in prayer, and the sins of their holy services, there is joy in the efficacy of their High Priest's intercession within the veil. The weakness of their graces is no hindrance to acceptance with Him who ever beholds His people *complete in Him* who is the "Head of all principality and power." And the final joy of the full harvest of complete victory, and of the everlasting espousals, is secured for faithful servants by the all-prevalent intercession of the great High Priest of their profession. As He spoke the things of His last prayer in the world, that His apostles who heard His words might have His joy fulfilled in themselves, so He continues ever to plead as their Advocate in heaven, that His approved servants may, in all their labours and conflicts and trials, have more and more of their Master's joy, and that at last they may return and come to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy upon their heads, when sorrow and sighing shall have eternally fled away.

*Thirdly. Consecration and advancement in holiness.*

A further blessing which Christ in His intercession seeks for His ministers and for all His other servants engaged in His work, is sanctification through the truth. Verse 17: "Sanctify them

by thy truth: thy word is truth." The exact import of this petition has been disputed. The original term, like the corresponding Hebrew word, signifies to *separate*, to *consecrate*, or *set apart to a sacred use*; and again, to *renew the moral nature*, by making it pious or holy. The petition has been frequently understood to import that the apostles and ministers of the gospel should be delivered more and more from the power and love of sin, and conformed in heart and life to the Divine likeness, as seen in Christ—and this through the instrumentality of the truth of God's word, clearly understood and fully believed. On the other hand, it has been contended by some that the petition exclusively refers to *consecration* or entire devotedness to the functions of the sacred office. While it is admitted that the word *sanctify* is often used in this sense, especially in the Old Testament, and applied to the separation and setting apart of persons and things to a sacred service—as the priests of Aaron's line, and the vessels of the sanctuary—there does not appear to be good ground for limiting the term exclusively to consecration to a holy office.\* When sanctification through the truth is sought for ministers, this would seem plainly to imply spiritual purification, for the truth of the word is rather an instrument for renewing the nature, and advancing in holiness, than for setting apart to a holy service. The petition may be properly taken to include both, as the official consecration of ministers implies and comprehends the sanctification of the heart and life. It denotes unquestionably the separation and entire devotement of those who are the objects of the petition to the sacred office; but this in connection with

\* This is the view taken by Dr. John Brown.

the internal work of sanctification, which is effected by the agency of the Spirit applying the word of truth to the heart and conscience. Considered in this extensive application, the petition is of transcendent importance to all ministers of the gospel. The Saviour, in His interceding work in heaven, continually seeks that they should be separated, and be wholly consecrated or devoted to the sacred office and its functions. He seeks likewise that they should advance in personal holiness. The truth which they are called to study and sent to proclaim is itself most pure; and they are entrusted with it that they themselves may thereby become more holy, and that they may be instruments for the sanctification of others. This entire consecration is characteristic of those ministers who are sent of God, and owned by Him as servants for promoting His glory, and for extensive blessing to the church. God is Himself the Author of this sanctification of His ministers; and this blessing, when obtained, is the fruit of the Saviour's intercession on their behalf. How much ought God's people continually and earnestly to seek this blessing for the church, and how eminent will be the power when it shall be universally conferred! When Zion's ministers are clothed with salvation, her saints shall shout aloud for joy.\* When those are made clean that bear the vessels of the Lord,† the church is delivered from long oppression, and "all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God."

The *pleas* by which the glorious High Priest seeks the sanctification of His ministers are weighty and prevailing. They have a mission into the world as His delegates and representatives, and therefore they

\* Psalm cxxxii. 16.

† Isaiah lii. 10, 11.

need to be separated from its pollutions, and to possess the spirit of true devotedness, and be examples of all holy living, that others may see the beauty of holiness, and be won to the acknowledgment of the truth. For these ends was Christ's own mission into the world to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,"\* and to overcome and expel its manifold pollutions. As equal in power and authority with the Father, and possessed of the same glory, Christ commissions His ministers and sends them into the world, that, like Him, they might be seen fully dedicated to His service, and, by the transforming power of the truth, might reflect His holiness in their spirit and conduct.

A second powerful plea which the Saviour offers for the perfect sanctification of His ministers and others, is from His own consecration to His work on earth, and its special design—"For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth,"† The sanctification of Himself, of which the Saviour here speaks, does not refer to internal purification, for He was always perfectly holy;—it denotes *self-consecration* for His people's sake. Nor does this consecration properly refer to the *past*, as when before He spake of His mission by the Father, John

\* Hebrews vii. 26.

† "Christ was concerned so much for them, and laid their case so near His heart, because He had himself put them into a difficult office, which required great abilities for the discharge of its duties. Whom Christ sends He will stand by, and interest Himself in those that are appointed for Him. What He calls us out to, He will fit us out for it, and bear us out in. He committed them to His Father, because He was concerned in the cause, their mission being in prosecution of His, and as it were an assignment out of it."—*M. Henry*.



x. 36—"Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world." Rather, He speaks of His sufferings and death as an act of consecration, future, but now near at hand. It is equivalent to His declaring—"For your sakes, I sanctify myself by willingly devoting myself to death; and this will be the grand and only way by which you will be separated, consecrated, and made holy through the truth." Not a few of the ancient expositors render the phrase, "*I sanctify myself*"—"I offer myself as a sacrifice," an expression which declares fully the import of the Saviour's pregnant statement. In infinite love and condescension, the Saviour became the Substitute for His people. For their sakes He willingly surrendered Himself to suffer afflictions of every sort, and devoted Himself to an expiatory death. At once the Priest and the Victim, He laid the sacrifice upon the altar, and He endured the penalty which Divine justice required to be inflicted for our sins. Thus He *sanctified* Himself, and was made perfect through sufferings, that He might effect the redemption of His people, and at the same time present to them a perfect example of entire consecration. One chief design of the Saviour devoting Himself to obedience unto death was, that His ministers might be consecrated fully to His service, and that they might be prepared willingly to offer themselves a *sacrifice* for His glory, and for "the service" of the church's faith.\*

The ministry is a precious fruit of the Saviour's atonement; it owes all its value and excellence to the shedding of His precious blood. What a powerful inducement for ministers to be devoted men, does

\* Phil. ii. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 6.



the consecration of the Redeemer to the work of His undertaking furnish! What a motive does it supply to them to "follow after holiness," that for their sakes He sanctified Himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth! As He freely gave His life a ransom, and poured out His blood to the death, so should they, by entire consecration to the work of the ministry, by sustained labour and patient suffering, and, if need be, by a martyr-death, show that they have been sanctified as He was, and that they are "growing in likeness to Him in all things." This sanctification of the ministry is *in* the truth, not *through*,\* but in relation to the truth which Christ declared in the world, and which He died to confirm. The grand doctrine of His vicarious sacrifice is the all-powerful truth, which leads to full consecration of heart and life, and which transforms ministers and others into saints of the most high God. Thus have there been given to the church as eminent blessings men who have willingly presented themselves as living sacrifices, ready to spend and be spent, devoted even to death for the glory of Christ, and for the promotion of the truth of the gospel and the salvation of souls. By giving Himself up to the death, the way was opened for the Spirit being sent to call and qualify the ministers of the word, to render them devoted, and examples of holiness. The grand object for which Christ gave Himself a sacrifice is effected through the ministry of men, who, attracted by His cross, yield themselves wholly to Him and to the promotion of His cause in the earth. The great

\* So the words are literally rendered, rather than "through the truth" of the Authorized Version.

truth of His perfect atonement is the principal sanctifying element to themselves, and of the ministry with which they are entrusted. This has been remarkably clear in the power of a consecrated ministry in the church in past ages; it should be earnestly sought for in relation to the ministry in our own day. In the future era of light and power which is promised to the church, we are assured that through this eminent devotedness in the ministry and the power of the truth, the cause of Christ shall be triumphant, and His kingdom shall be universally established.

*Fourthly. Union.*

When the Saviour intercedes for His apostles and ministers, He prays—"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are," ver. 11. This was to be the ultimate effect of their separation from the world, and of their entire consecration to the service of their glorious Master. In a subsequent part of the prayer this holy oneness is sought for the whole church; and its character, excellency, and great importance are exhibited. But here, as it is specifically sought for the ministry, its nature and value deserve particular consideration. This oneness is not the vital union which believers have by the work of the Spirit, and by faith with Christ, the Head; but it is unity of heart with God and with one another, and oneness of end and aim in the work of advancing the Divine glory. It is the nearest unity of spirit among Christ's servants, in all that they are appointed to do in the world. To attain this is a matter of the greatest difficulty, and yet of unspeakable importance, as is seen by the petition, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name," &c. This implies

that through the numerous evils to which they are exposed, the servants of Christ are liable to have this oneness of spirit and end marred and broken; and that only by constant Divine keeping can it be attained. While this unity is greatly desirable for all Christ's disciples, it is specially needful for ministers of the gospel, if their ministry would be efficient of the great ends of the sacred office. Without it they cannot grow spiritually or have abounding comfort. By being one with the Head and with the members, we have "nourishment ministered and knit together—we increase with the increase of God."\* We have peace with God when we are at peace with one another. Thus the gospel is furthered in the world; the servants of Christ are preserved; and their usefulness and happiness are promoted. This oneness of heart and disposition embraces the great object for which the Father sent the Son into the world, and which the Saviour had in view in all His work on earth. It leads believers to form the same estimate of the Divine glory as the persons of the Godhead entertained, and to seek that in all things God may be glorified, especially in the salvation of lost sinners. United in heart and desire to God and to one another, they acquiesce in the Father sending and not sparing His Son, and in the Saviour giving Himself an offering and a sacrifice to put away sin, and to obtain eternal redemption for His people. They have the same earnest desires, and put forth like vigorous efforts, to make known God's salvation, and to rescue sinners from the wrath to come. In the spirit of true devotedness, they are of "one heart and one mind, striving together for the faith of the

\* Col. ii. 19.

gospel;" and they are willing to spend and be spent, and to endure all things, that the elect may be saved, and that the glory of God may fill the whole earth. This is the oneness for which the Saviour pleads, the realisation of which is of unspeakable importance to the ministers of the word. To themselves, this unity ministers true happiness and comfort, promotes the efficiency of their work, and is a main element of success in all their labours. In the words of the illustrious *Calvin*—"Then will our unity be truly happy when it shall bear the image of the Father and of Christ, as the wax takes the form of the seal which is impressed upon it." With the mind of Christ within us, and in unity of spirit and aim with all who devote themselves to His service, ministers become fit instruments for promoting God's work in the earth. In so far as they manifest this spirit, they are "workers together with God," for effecting His designs of love and mercy in the world; and this too will be the measure of their success in spiritual work in the earth. How constantly should the ministers of the gospel aim at the attainment of this all-desirable and blessed unity! How fervently should all who seek that the Lord's work should prosper in the earth, pray that all the ministers of Christ may be one, even as the Father and the Son are one!

## SECTION IV.

### PRAYER FOR ALL BELIEVERS OR FOR THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

THE third class that have a special interest in the Saviour's intercessory prayer are spoken of as "they also who shall believe on Me through their word." This includes all true believers, not only such as are at present in a believing state, but those too who hereafter may be brought into the same condition. Those who are in God's purpose of election, though yet uncalled, have a part in the Saviour's intercession; and they shall, in consequence of it, and through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, become heirs of eternal salvation. Christ Jesus Himself is the great object of their faith; and the word of the gospel, as it holds forth and exhibits Christ, is the instrument by which it is wrought in the heart. These believe on Christ by the word, as they are brought to know Him savingly—to assent to the truth concerning Him—to embrace Him; and, resigning themselves wholly to Him, to rest and rely upon Him alone for life and salvation. All these are specially regarded in the Saviour's last prayer, and for these He makes special intercession in heaven.

The expression in the 20th verse, "*Neither pray I for them alone, but for them also,*" obviously implies that believers have a part in the petitions offered in the preceding verses on behalf of the apostles and ministers of the word. All the petitions which have been already presented for those who are in official stations in the church are offered likewise for true



believers, and for those who shall hereafter be called by grace. The Saviour's prayer for them includes both *petitions* and *pleas* to enforce them,\* and it embraces persons possessed of a like character as the apostles, placed in peculiar circumstances, and having such peculiar claims as they had. They were given by the Father to Christ, and He accepted the donation and acknowledges them as His. The Saviour had manifested the Father's name to them. They had received His words, and had known that the Son had been sent of the Father, having believed in His Divine character and mediatorial mission. For them the Saviour seeks the same blessings as He pleads for on behalf of His apostles and the ministers of the word. He prays that they might be kept through the truth from evil of every kind in the world—both evil persons and things, that they may be consecrated to God's service, and made holy. The sanctification of the whole man—soul, body, and spirit, “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” † is a petition which the Saviour constantly offers for all believers, the answer of which they receive in their separation from the world, in their growing conformity to the image of Christ, and in their perfection in holiness and felicity. He asks for them likewise, as the ulterior blessing which their preservation from the evil of the world, and their personal sanctification conduce to secure, *spiritual union to God and to one another*. However important and valuable these privileges were to the apostles and ministers of the gospel,

\* Such is the radical import of the Greek verb—to *ask* or *seek*.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 Thess. v. 23.

they are equally necessary and precious to all believers. The pleas by which the Saviour urges their bestowment on the former are as valid for conferring them on the latter. The weakest believer has encouragement, on the footing of the intercession of his great High Priest, to hope that he will be preserved uninjured and uncontaminated by the evils of the world, become holy in all manner of conversation, and realise spiritual union with Christ, the Head, and at the same time with all the members of the mystical body in heaven and earth. Our comfort and assured hope are that such petitions and pleas are presented for us continually by the High Priest within the veil, and that they must succeed in obtaining the blessings sought. We may rest here as individuals that we shall be preserved from the power of evil, and that our souls shall be kept continually. And, on the same ground, we may be assured that the church will be safe in all dangers, be recovered and revived from decays and backslidings, built-up and established in the earth, and be made "an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations."

The spiritual blessings which the Saviour seeks for the universal church of the redeemed are *twofold*. *The first class refers to the church while in the world;* and the second to *the church triumphant*, taken out of the world to a glorious state in heaven. For the church on earth, He prays that they may come to the most perfect unity. This is enforced by pleas the most solemn and cogent—that the world will thus be brought to believe in the mission and work of the Saviour, and that this unity would be effected by the glory which the Father had given Christ, and which He had given to believers. The prayer for

the church to be brought to the heavenly state is—  
“ Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” This is also enforced by the brief, appropriate, and powerful plea—“ For Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

THE PETITION FOR THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH.

This is expressed with peculiar emphasis. It is put as the great end of believers' preservation and sanctification. “ *That,*” in order that “ *they all may be one.*” Again, it is referred to as the great object why Christ gives to His people the glory which the Father had given Him. “ *That they may be one, even as we are.*” And, That the union might be with Christ, and with God through Him, and thus with one another, and perfect through oneness with Christ. The Saviour had already sought a blessed oneness for His apostles and ministers, and for all believers through the word of the gospel. From the connection in which He presents the concluding petition for the whole church on earth, it is evident that He designs the blessing sought to be regarded as most important and excellent—as that which constitutes the highest spiritual attainment of the church on earth, and which is essential to her greatest efficiency and prosperity.

In all its aspects, this *union of believers* with Christ and with one another is excellent and glorious. It is through the agency and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and is spiritual and holy. It is most close and intimate, identifying Christ and His saints, as the Head and the members are one body, and the husband and wife are one flesh. Surpassing all

comparisons of the nearest conjunction in creatures, it resembles the unity between the persons of the Godhead. As the Father is in Christ, and believers in Him, so are they one with the blessed Godhead and with one another. The Saviour, the Son of God, is the centre of this blessed unity; and through Him believers have an indissoluble and complete oneness with the God of grace and glory. In consequence of this mystical spiritual union, believers have experimental knowledge of God above others; they enjoy familiar access to Him as their Father in Christ, and have all spiritual blessings from Him; and theirs is perfect safety and preservation to the end. "All is theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." This union to God in Christ and spiritual oneness in the church, are manifested in conjunction in the great object for which the Son was sent into the world, and which His work on earth contemplated—the promotion of the Divine glory in the salvation of sinners. This may be taken as the special design of this petition for the closest and most hallowed union. It is a prayer that the church in all its members, in all ages and countries, and in all conditions, may be so united in spirit and desire, in aim and operation, that they may, by the spread and power of the truth, and as workers together with God, contribute to the universal conversion of sinners, and the filling of the whole earth with Jehovah's glory. What a high and blessed attainment is such union! How eminent will be a Christian profession when it shall be thus characterised! How happy the fellowship of the church, when in all its sections and in every land, its loving members, one in heart and spirit, are seen to live and labour, to spend and be spent for no other than this one great object—the advancement of



Jehovah's glory in the wondrous scheme of human redemption! When, through the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, such unity shall have been reached, then all darkness and error shall disappear; divisions and alienations shall cease, Zion shall appear beautiful for situation—the joy of the earth. The “mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it.” \*

The Saviour's *pleas* in support of the petition are—  
1. “That the world may believe Thou hast sent Me.” The “world” here has the same meaning as in the preceding part of the prayer. It denotes the world lying in the wicked one, the mass of the unbelieving—mankind in their fallen condition, alienated from God, ignorant, ungodly, rebellious. The Saviour who engaged in covenant and came forth from the Father, to redeem out of the ruins of the fall a people to Himself, entertains designs of mercy for a perishing world. Though He does not love the world with peculiar complacential affection, He has the will of benevolence that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. He designs that His word and other means of salvation shall be universally diffused; and that, by His blessing upon these means, great multitudes shall be actually saved, the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, nations shall be born in a day, “the isles shall wait for His law,” and “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” The *matter* of the plea, “That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me,” is, that men may be generally brought to the knowledge of the truth, that they may believe the

\* Psalm xlviii. 2; Isaiah ii. 2.



great fundamental doctrines of the Trinity, the covenant of peace, the mission of the Saviour, and the nature, objects, and ends of His atonement; and come to the experimental knowledge of God and His Son, Jesus Christ, which is life eternal. The grand way by which the world will be converted to this true faith is this union of believers, for which the Saviour prays. A chief hindrance to the world's conversion hitherto has been the want of this spiritual union among believers in Christ, and the imperfect manifestation of the spirit, which union to Christ the Head, and oneness with all the members of His mystical body, should exhibit.

The conversion of the world to the faith of the gospel has ever been an object of surpassing interest to all holy beings throughout all by-past ages. It was contemplated in the counsels of Godhead from eternity. It was held out to the faith and hope of the church in bright predictions and promises before Christ's advent into the world. The church was taught of old to pray—"God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and make Thy face to shine on us, that Thy way may be known on the earth, thy salvation to all nations."\* This was the subject of the Saviour's perpetual intercession in heaven; as all His people on earth are directed daily to pray—"Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."† When the Redeemer was about to ascend to heaven, He declared His will, that "repentance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name among

\* Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.

† Matt. vi. 10; Psal. ii. 8.

all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”\* After the day of Pentecost, the infant Christian church, instinct with the fresh baptism of the Spirit, proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom throughout many countries; and great multitudes, rescued from darkness and idolatry, embraced the faith, and turned to the Lord. At different periods in the subsequent history of Christianity, especially in modern times, missions have been originated for the world’s conversion, and some gratifying success has followed the efforts put forth for this object. Yet the success hitherto has greatly fallen short of a full accomplishment of many great and precious promises, so that the prospect of all nations being enlightened and submitting to the sceptre of Messiah, the prince, appears yet far distant.

Various reasons may be assigned why so little progress has been made in a work which is so intimately connected with the Saviour’s glory, and with the grand object of the church’s mission into the world. The church has yet, to a very limited extent, realised the magnitude of the world’s conversion, and her obligations to devote herself fully, and to employ all her resources for its attainment. Divided sentiments on fundamental truth, alienation of affection, separations, and religious contests have either prevented efforts for the spiritual illumination of the world, or have tended to neutralize them, and prevented their yielding the desired fruit. We have the amplest warrant to expect much greater progress in this great work in connection with enlarged faithful efforts than has hitherto occurred. This will flow from the abundant effusion of the

\* Luke xxiv. 47.

Spirit as the fruit of the Saviour's intercession for the church, and as connected with the fervent prayers and devoted labours of His servants. Especially when the unity for which the Redeemer prays shall have been realised, then mighty impediments to the conversion of all nations will be removed; and the church, distinguished by a united full profession of the truth, and animated by the spirit of fervent zeal and glowing love, will become the instrument of her own enlargement and a blessing in the earth.

The unity of Christians in *doctrinal sentiment* will have a powerful effect on the world's conversion. By the promised plentiful effusion of the Spirit, the great truths of revelation will be more clearly seen and more generally embraced; and the power of the truth will be felt in reclaiming men from error, and enlightening, sanctifying, and building up in the faith of the gospel. As in primitive times, Christians, quickened and taught by the Spirit, will be "of one heart and one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;" and will, by their profession, and spirit, and conduct, soften the world's prejudices, and constrain them to acknowledge the divinity of their religion. Thus will multitudes impressed, be led to acknowledge that professing Christians are genuine disciples of one glorious Master, and to exclaim with admiration and desire, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."\* For this unity in the faith, and in love and aim of Christians, we should fervently pray, and continually and earnestly labour, as the chief means for effecting the world's conversion. It should not be reckoned

\* Zech. viii. 23.

enough that such unity should exist, and operate internally, as it ever has done, among all true believers, or even that it should be more widely prevalent among Christians. They should seek to attain oneness of faith and outward profession by labouring after clearer, fuller views of the truth, and submitting the whole heart and life to its power; and, through the constraining influence of brotherly affection, they should set themselves to break down the walls of visible separation. Thus there will be exhibited in the church universal "One faith, one Lord, and one baptism," and the bright promise of the last times will be fully fulfilled—"The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name One." \*

2. The *second plea* which our Lord advances in praying for this unity of believers, as the grand means of effecting the world's conversion, is expressed in singularly comprehensive and emphatic terms in verses 22d and 23d—"And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me." These expressive words declare that the Father had bestowed on the Son "the glory," or "that glory" which He confers on His people, for the purpose of effecting among them the closest unity; again, that this union should advance in different degrees till it comes to perfection, and then shall the world in general be fully convinced of the Divine mission of the Saviour and of the great objects of His under-

\* Zech. xiv. 9.



taking. Thus shall they be brought to know that believers are the objects of Jehovah's love, as the Son is that of the Father. This glory which the Father gives the Son, of which believers are made partakers, has been viewed in various lights. It evidently cannot be that of the Divine nature, for this is not communicable to creatures; nor is it that for which the Saviour prays in verse 24, as this has respect to the heavenly state and of blessedness; nor is it the power of working miracles, for the glory here spoken of is imparted to all believers. It is that glory which is given to Christ, as He was sent into the world, and is connected with the work which He was to do on the earth. He was sent as the Messenger of the Covenant, and invested with office and power and authority to make known God's truth, to effect the salvation of sinners, and to manifest God's glory to the widest extent, and in the most illustrious manner throughout the world. This glory He confers upon His people, as He calls and qualifies them to carry forward the work in which He was employed in the world. They thereby share with Him high honour and a peculiar glory. He was the "Light of the world," and they are appointed to "shine as lights in the world." He is a King-Priest, and they are a "royal priesthood,"—"a kingdom of priests," consecrated to a sacred service, endued with a royal spirit, and having authority and power to reign as kings on the earth. The Mediator was appointed and qualified by the Father to glorify Him on the earth; and He calls and fits servants for the same great work. This is all their business on earth, which should task all their powers and engage their constant efforts. As they are seen engaged in its performance, they are precious and



honourable in God's sight; they partake of the glory which is given to the Saviour, as His "servant whom He upholds; His elect in whom His soul delighteth." \*

This glory, so bright and wonderful, is given by the Redeemer to His people for the purpose of effecting the most exalted oneness. "That they may be one in us. I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in me," or "perfectly one." Soon as believers are brought generally to share the glory which the Saviour received from the Father, and to show it forth in their works, they will share in a union surpassing in spirituality and excellence all that exists among creatures, however exalted. As the Persons of the blessed Trinity have the glory of Godhead—the last end in all Divine works—so believers show themselves united in the closest spiritual bonds, living and labouring for the same end. The vital union which the Spirit effects between them and the Head leads them to all holy efforts for glorifying God on earth, as their consecration to this great work tends to cement more closely the union in faith and love, in aim and object, of all believers, and to manifest its power and excellency to the world.

Holy spiritual union cultivated by constant devoted efforts for promoting God's glory not only brings believers to be perfectly one, but likewise impressively instructs the world in the mystery of Jehovah's love to His people. "That the world may know that Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me." This presents the grandest, loftiest view of believers' privileges, and of the glory and excellency of the

\* Isaiah xlii. 1.

work to which they are called, and to which, if they obey the "heavenly calling," their lives and energies are devoted. As the Father ever manifested complacential regard to the Mediator when engaged in His work on earth, and as He still carries it forward since His ascension to glory, so His servants constantly, devotedly employed in His work, are regarded as loved of the Father, as He was. Constrained by the love of Christ to live not to themselves, but to Him and His service alone, they come themselves to the full assurance of God's love; and others are brought to see and acknowledge them as the objects of peculiar Divine favour—"the seed which the Lord hath blessed." How honourable and glorious the work of labouring for the world's conversion! The humblest, poorest believer on earth, through union to His exalted Head, and by oneness with the household of faith, has an honour above all that the world can confer, and shares in a glory surpassing the most splendid lustre of costly gems, and the highest fame and dignity of earth. In the view of such an honour and privilege, how much should Christians ever consider their high vocation! How entirely should they surrender themselves—their whole time, talents, and energies—to this great work! While so engaged, we become in the fullest sense "*workers together with God*,"\* in carrying forward the

\* "When praying for the perfect union of the church, Jesus pleaded with His Father, '*Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.*' How truly wonderful! The Father loves Jesus. He ever loved Him; He ever will love Him. Because He loved Him, He gave all things into His hands, showed all things which He Himself did, and glorified Him with Himself. God loves us, because He loved Jesus, who is our Head and Representative. He loves us as He loves Jesus—not equally but similarly. His love to us was eternal, tender,

grand purpose which engaged the counsels of eternity. The highest orders of holy intelligences would regard it as an honour to be employed in this service. All are ennobled, however humble their condition or capacity, who are called to engage in it. If sensible of the honour given us, in being one with all faithful servants, and fellow-labourers with saints for promoting God's glory, difficulties and opposition will be accounted nothing. Instead of being deterred, or turning aside because of them, we shall be consecrated to greater efforts to meet and overcome them. We are one with the Omnipotent in carrying forward His designs of love and mercy. "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us." "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."\* The universal church, united in faith and love, consecrated in spirit and aim to the one great work of making known God's light and salvation to all nations, will be seen and admired by a converted world—as greatly "beloved of the Lord"—an "eternal excellency," the "joy of many generations." "God, our God, shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him."

and unchangeable as His love to Jesus was. He loves us as His children, as bearing His image. He loves us, and therefore He bestows grace, gifts, and glory upon us. He loves us, and therefore He assists us, accepts us, and will reward us by-and-by. Beloved, if God thus loves us, it calls upon us to be patient under all His dealings, even as Jesus was patient. The very thought should impart comfort under all our trials, toils, and sorrows; and we ought to exercise confidence in God at all seasons; for what can He deny us if He loves us as He does His only-begotten Son! and He ever did love us freely, and nothing shall ever alienate His love from us."—Rev. James Smith, "*Daily Bible Readings*," p. 326.

\* Isaiah xxvi. 12; Psalm xlv. 11.

## SECTION V.

### PRAYER IN REFERENCE TO THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN.

THE last of the Saviour's petitions for His church in His Intercessory Prayer concerns its eternal felicity in heaven; and this, like the preceding petitions, contains a supplication for a blessing asked, and a plea or argument urged why it should be bestowed. The petition is expressed in the words—"Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." The plea is—"For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Repeatedly before the Saviour had designated His apostles and ministers "those whom Thou hast given me." He had likewise so characterized all those who, in all ages and countries, would believe in Him through their word. To these He had manifested the Father's name, and made known His truth, and through His grace they had kept it. For them He had prayed that the Father would keep them, consecrate and sanctify them by and in reference to the truth. He had sought that they might be closely united in mind and heart; and that, one in aim and endeavour and action, they might glorify Christ in the salvation of men, and through Him glorify the Father. For the purpose of accomplishing this blessed result, He had sought not that they should be removed out of the world, but rather that they should be continued in it—only to be preserved from the evil one, and evil deeds that are in it, until this desirable



consummation should be effected. The Saviour, knowing that this world was not designed to be the permanent abode of His redeemed, asks for them, in conclusion, blessings and a blessedness far beyond aught that can be realised in time or on earth. Through His unspeakable love for them, and His tender concern for their welfare, He had asked for them the best blessings which they could enjoy on earth—Divine preservation, consecration and sanctification, and oneness with each other, after the model of the unity of the Godhead. But the love of Jesus to His saints looks beyond such privileges, however excellent, and seeks for them the enjoyment of blessings of a higher character and of eternal duration. In seeing “from the travail of His soul,” He is fully “satisfied,” only when His people are eternally blessed, by being brought to heaven where He is, to dwell with Him there, to behold and partake of His glory.\*

The terms of the petition would be expressed more clearly and definitely if they were rendered according to the order of the original—“Father, as to those whom Thou hast given me, I will that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory.” The word “also” is thus freed from the ambiguity of apparently referring to other persons, and points to the place where the Redeemer is, that His people for whom He prays may *be also there*,

\* The words of the excellent *Robert Trail* here are apposite and singularly expressive—“He loved them so well, that He came to where they were on earth, and endured there what they deserved; and now, He expresses His love by desiring that they may be where He is in heaven, and behold and enjoy there, so far as is competent to them, the glory He has merited.”



never to be separated from Him. The language with which the petition begins—" *I will*," may be that of authority; it may express, as has been generally said, "claim founded on right," and pleading the merit of the atonement. What the Saviour asks in His intercession He has sovereign power, as God equal with the Father, and as Mediator, to confer, by way of authoritative command. Or it may, as elsewhere,\* express *strong desire*. It is as if He had said—"Father, it is my desire that those whom Thou hast given me may be with me in heaven, to behold and enjoy my glory." Not only does He ask for them the blessing, but the expressed desire of His heart contains a virtual promise that death will do them the important service of introducing them to the beatific vision of their Lord and Master.†

The import of the Saviour's petition may be seen in the simple but significant words in which it is expressed—"That they may be with me where I am." This does not mean that they should be with Christ in "heavenly places" on earth, in the exercise of spiritual frames and dispositions, and that they should have near and realising views of His glory. Nor does it intend that they should now have clearer and fuller discoveries of things in heaven where Christ was soon to be. Rather the words, according to their obvious meaning, point to

\* The Reformers pretty generally explained the opening words of this petition—*I will*, by *I will*, or *desire*. Thus, Calvin, "When he says *I will*, it is as if he had said *I desire*." To *will* is put for to *wish*. For neither is it the word of one *commanding*, but of one *asking*. Musculus also says, "What Christ says to the Father, *I will*, is not a word of *commanding*, but *asking*."

† John xii. 26; Mark xii. 25.

heaven, and to the high privileges of the saints, when they are taken from earth, and they enter into their glorified, eternal state. The Saviour's work on earth was so near its completion, that He could speak of His exaltation to heaven as if He had already reached it. "*Where I am.*" The Redeemer, when in His resurrection body He ascended up on high, must have gone to a place excelling in glory, where all Divine perfections shine forth with surpassing lustre, where all that can satisfy and delight minds perfectly pure is enjoyed; and the bodies of the saints, raised incorruptible and spiritual, find exquisite and endless pleasure. This is the place where the Son in our nature sits enthroned at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, in possession of the high reward of His finished work on earth. Of heaven, He is the grand central glory—the Lamb in the midst of the throne, receiving the homage of angels, and attracting the hearts of all holy intelligences. This is His Father's house—the place He has gone to prepare for His people, and to which He designs to bring them home—this "the palace of the King," to which the Bride, fully prepared, is brought with gladness and rejoicing." \* How glorious is the place to which Jesus has gone, and where He now is! How greatly desirable is it to dwell there, above the loftiest and most splendid mansions on earth!

But the Saviour prays not only that His saints should be admitted to heaven, but likewise that they should be *with Him there*. This means that they should be ever in His immediate presence, and should enjoy intimate and endeared intercourse with Him.

\* Psalm xlv. 15.

On earth, while they realised the conversion of saints, they had fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Brought into spiritual union to Him as their vital loving Head, they were identified with Him in endearing relations and common work. He communicated to them holy graces and saving blessings; and they rendered to Him in return spiritual affections and acts of spiritual worship. Believers thus, on earth, enjoy the Saviour's gracious presence, and have endeared fellowship with Him. At times they are made sensible of this, and can say—"God is in this place." "We were with Him in the holy mount." "The King hath brought me into His chambers." "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee." The privilege, however, which the Redeemer seeks for His people in heaven, when He prays that they may be with Him where He is, though the *same in kind*, is vastly *superior in degree* to the highest intercourse which they were permitted to enjoy on earth. *Here* He is *with* them, sustaining and upholding them, admitting them to such intercourse, and imparting to them such blessings as are adapted to their state of imperfection. *There* He will receive them to Himself at His coming; and they are in the fullest sense *with Him*. Being made perfect in knowledge and holiness, they are brought much nearer to Him than they were, even in the most favoured scenes of fellowship on earth. Completely conformed to His image and likeness, they are not only in His immediate presence in glory, but their minds and hearts are one with Him in views and feelings. They are His jewels, made up, polished, and set in the diadem on His head, to reflect His glory. They are with Him as worshippers in the Upper Sanctuary, whose lofty praises He accentuates,

and whose offerings He perfumes with the incense of His mediation; they are with Him as overcomers, sitting with Him on His throne. They are with Him as His ransomed, gathered flock, whom He feeds in heavenly pastures. This intercourse of the saints with Christ in heaven is *immediate* and *direct*, and no longer, as on earth, through the word and ordinances. It is *uninterrupted*, as there are interposing clouds and sin no more, and they go no more out. It is *eternal*. Through unending ages they are with Him in all the transcendent bliss which His covenant favour and love delight to impart. This exalted fellowship with Christ brings the saints to like blissful communion with the Father. He brings them to God, and presents them to Himself and the Father without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; while the Lamb leads them to the source of all felicity—"living fountains of water," God wipes away all tears from their eyes. "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."\* How amazing and inconceivable the happiness secured for the saints made perfect, when, in answer to the Saviour's prayer, they shall be brought to be with Him where He is!

The grand design for which the saints are brought to be with the Redeemer where He is, is that "*they may behold His glory*." This is provided to satisfy their highest desires, and to constitute the full felicity of their state in heaven. The glory of the Saviour is the bright shining forth of His excellency in the dignity to which He is exalted, and in the works which He performs. As one of the persons of the

\* Isaiah lx. 19.



Trinity, equal in power and Godhead with the Father and the Spirit, He possesses a glory surpassing that of all creatures, intrinsic, unchangeable, and inconceivable. But this is not that which is spoken of here, inasmuch as this is said to be *given Him*, and saints *behold* it, whereas the glory of Godhead He possesses in Himself from eternity, and finite minds can never see and comprehend what is infinite. The glory which He desires that His people may see in heaven, is that which belongs to Him as Mediator of the Covenant, the offices and relations assigned to Him in His Surety-undertaking, the glory of His finished work on earth, and of the dignity to which He has been raised as His glorious reward. It is the glory of His perfect humanity, of His spotless accepted sacrifice, of His exaltation to the throne of all worlds, and of His universal dominion. It is the glory of His perpetual and prevailing intercession, of His receiving the homage and worship of unsinning angels, and of the innumerable hosts of the redeemed brought home to heaven. Possessed of omnipotent power and sovereign authority, and of all fulness of grace, wisdom, and love, He controls and disposes all things throughout the universe, so that all discord and evil of every kind shall be removed, and the glory of moral goodness, holiness, and truth shall be displayed in transcendant and perpetual effulgence. Through the character, dignity, and work of the Saviour in heaven, the glory of creation, providence, and redemption is brightly and fully displayed. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in His works."\*

The glory of the Mediator is seen by His saints

\* Psalm civ. 31.



here. Its discovery by the Spirit is a chief part of His saving work in applying the purchased redemption, and regenerating the soul. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus."\* The life of faith is maintained by steadily contemplating the Saviour's glory, and thus our sanctification is promoted and perfected. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."† Beholding the Saviour's glory by faith here is a preparation indispensably required to the perfect vision of the heavenly world. As we behold "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," we are transformed into His likeness; and, through the earnest of the Spirit, anticipating the future, bright manifestations, "we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."‡

The vision by faith here of the Saviour's glory, even where it is clearest and most fragrant, is vastly surpassed by that to which the saints are admitted in heaven. On earth their spiritual vision is imperfect. They see only "through a glass darkly." The discoveries of Christ's glory are transient and evanescent. "He looketh forth through the windows, blooming forth through the lattices."§ His "*back parts*"—the passing, retiring glory of a princely pageant—are seen, but His *face*—the full manifestation of His

\* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† 2 Cor. iii. 18.

‡ The connection between the vision of Christ's glory by faith here, and the beatific vision in glory, is beautifully illustrated by Dr. Owen, in his posthumous work, "*Meditations on the Glory of Christ.*"

§ Song ii. 9. So the original may be best rendered.

glory—cannot be seen.\* In heaven the Saviour will be seen by His saints in the surpassing dignity and beauty of His Person—no longer through the medium of word and ordinances. His perfections will be displayed with cloudless lustre; and He will stand forth, the grand object of enraptured thought and supreme affection, in all the dignity of His mediatorial offices—in all the attractive, ravishing splendour of the most endearing relations. The vision of this glory will be *immediate, intuitive, and unchanged* for ever. The redeemed, made perfect in their intellectual and moral nature, are fitted to bear this exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. The beholding of it will effect in them a complete transformation. “We shall be like Him”—perfectly, as far as creatures are capable of such assimilation—“seeing Him as He is.”† The vision is *beatific*. The rays of the Saviour’s glory uninterruptedly streaming into the souls of His saints, they are perfectly blessed in the discoveries of His grace and glory. They share His blessedness, and advance to higher degrees of happiness continually; and they reflect His glory, showing forth its lustre and excellence for ever. This is the Saviour’s earnest desire and prayer for all His saints, which shall one day be answered in their conscious blissful experience. They shall be privileged to see Him as He is—to know perfectly all He has done for them; and while beholding Him with ecstatic wonder and admiration, as He owns them in the most endearing relations, to partake of His blessedness for ever. The welcome by Christ to His faithful servants at death is—“Enter into the joy of your Lord.” Beholding,

\* Exod. xxxiii. 23.

† 1 John iii. 2.

according to the import of the original term, is partaking. We behold the glory of the King, when we share and behold His glory. How consoling and sustaining to the believer is the prospect of the eternal state, arising from this petition! With *Luther*, we may say—"We should make this sentence our pillow, and a bed of down for our souls, and with a glad heart repair to it when the happy hour draws nigh." \*

The Saviour's petition for His saints, that they may behold His glory, is fully answered—

1. In *their admission as individuals to heaven at death*; and 2, In *the reception of the whole ransomed church to its state of perfect blessedness at His second coming*. The death of the saints, in whatever way, or under whatever circumstances it may take place, *is precious in the sight of the Lord*. Unstinged and sanctified through His atoning death, it is a "departure" to be with Christ—it is an entrance into "the joy of the Lord." When their mansion is prepared for them in the Father's house above, and they are prepared for it, He comes to receive them to Himself, "that where He is there they may be also."† However imperfect our conceptions yet of the state into which the disembodied spirits of the righteous enter immediately at death, we have the fullest assurance that they are at once admitted to the presence of the Saviour whom they loved and served, in a sense nearer and higher than they could apprehend on earth. They realise the conscious enjoyment

\* "There is no fading in heaven, for with God there is no variableness—no, not so much as 'a shadow of turning.' After so many millions of years as there are hairs on thy head, it shall be as bright as it was on the last day; and the reason is, because of God's presence. So long as God fades not, heaven will never fade."—*Goodwin*. † John xiv. 3.

of bless unspeakable in their union to Him, and in the bright and soul-satisfying vision of His glory. When "absent from the body" they are forthwith "present with the Lord." They are with Him "in paradise." The work of their sanctification complete, they take rank among the spirits of just men made perfect; and as they awake to the full sense of their glorified condition, they "behold His face in righteousness, and are satisfied with His likeness."\*

The full realisation by the church of the First-born of the prayer of the exalted Intercessor is reserved for the period of the final resurrection, and His glorious appearing. Then the bodies of the saints that slept in the dust shall be raised up in glory, being fashioned like the body of His glory; and their souls re-united to them will receive a vast accession of knowledge and happiness, above all they were capable of in their separate state. Amid the surpassing wonders of the judgment day—the grand assize of the universe—they shall see, with wrapt admiration and delight, "the King in His beauty." They shall be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and enthroned with Him as assessors in the universal judgment. Their life, which was "hid with Christ in God," shall then shine forth in the full radiance of manifested glory. His glory, as the Saviour, does not reach its full height and display till the great "day of the manifestation of the sons of God." He will then come "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."† The Bride, the Lamb's wife, fully made up and arrayed in embroideries of gold, is brought with ecstatic joy into the palace of the King, there for ever to abide. The

\* Psalm xvii. 15.

† 2 Thess. i. 10.



voice of welcome from Him who sits on the great white throne thrills, with inconceivable delight, the company gathered at the right hand—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."\* The nations of the saved, the countless millions of the redeemed, gathered from all earthly conditions, and from all kindreds and nations, and people and tongues, shall enter in through the open gates of the city, received and welcomed by the Redeemer, as the objects of His eternal love—the costly purchase and travail of the agonies of His soul. They are welcomed by innumerable hosts of holy angels, rejoicing in the perfect fellowship of the saints, and joining with them in their rapturous praises. The "ransomed of the Lord return and come" to the heavenly Zion, to be for ever with Him—everlasting joy as a bright garland upon their heads, and "sorrow and sighing" having fully and for ever fled away. A chief part of their unspeakable and endless happiness will be to study and take in enlarged discoveries of the glory of the Redeemer, as seen in His matchless person and offices, and as it beams forth in diversified and wondrous manifestations in the works of nature and redemption, and in the Divine government, throughout the ages of eternity. Thus the last, most expressive petition of the great High Priest of our profession, which was heard for the saved throughout all time past, and will be answered through coming ages till time shall be no more, will throughout eternity procure blessedness for them of which at present our loftiest thoughts and desires can form no adequate conception.

The *argument* by which this petition is en-

\* Matthew xxv. 34.



forced is expressed in the emphatic words—“*For Thou lovedst me from before the foundation of the world.*” The Saviour asks that His people may be with Him in heaven to behold His glory, on the footing of the Father’s eternal and unchangeable love to Him. He was the object of the Father’s infinite love, as His only-begotten Son, when He lay in His bosom from all eternity. His love was set upon Him when He appointed Him Mediator and Surety in the covenant, and entrusted all the concerns of His glory in the salvation of sinners into His hand. It rested ever upon Him, without diminution and change in His whole work of obedience and suffering. The covenant-love of the Father towards the Redeemer was the foundation of the glory that was conferred upon Him as His high reward. It secures the fulfilment of all the stipulations of the covenant with respect to Himself and to the heirs of salvation. The plea, “*Because Thou lovedst me,*” &c., expresses the Saviour’s full confidence that the Father’s love, which sustained and bore Him through all His arduous undertaking, would continue with Him for ever, fulfilling the high desire of His heart, in glorifying Him by bringing all His ransomed ones to be with Him in heaven, and making Him and them blessed for ever in their beholding and partaking of His glory. What an emphatic plea and prevailing argument for obtaining all this privilege and blessedness is the unspeakable love of the eternal Father to His Son, the Mediator, whom He heareth always, and in whom He is ever well pleased! The eternal love of the Father to the Son will be displayed to the saints made perfect as at once the source of all the heavenly glory, and the spring of all their blessedness in Him.

## SECTION VI.

### CONCLUSION.

THE last two verses of the chapter, which contain the most weighty and expressive statements, have generally been regarded by expositors as the *conclusion* of our Lord's great intercessory prayer. The state of heart and mind of the Saviour when He uttered these words, and the singularly significant terms which He used, demand that they should be seriously pondered, the import of each separate clause deeply considered, and their connection with the whole preceding prayer clearly apprehended. "O Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them," verses 25 and 26.

These solemn declarations can hardly be regarded, as is done by some expositors,\* as an additional petition, either expressed or implied; or as a plea to enforce the petition contained in the twenty-fourth verse; or, more generally, as a plea to enforce all the preceding petitions contained in the prayer. If the words are attentively considered, they will be seen to express no desire, and to ask for no blessing; and there is nothing in them of the nature of an argument to enforce either the last petition, or the others which were offered throughout any part of the

\* M. Henry and Newton.

Saviour's intercessory prayer. There is an observable difference between the conclusion of the prayer which Christ taught His disciples, and the sentences uttered by Him in the end of this His great priestly prayer. In the former case—"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory"—the different clauses may be regarded as arguments to claim the granting of each separate petition. In this—in the last solemn words which the Saviour spake as He left the upper chamber, and went forth with His disciples to the scene of His begun agony—we have not properly a part of the prayer, but a comprehensive statement of the present condition of the great work entrusted to Him; of the state of the world, viewed as ignorant of Him and apostate from God; of the character and privileges of His people; and a full resignation of Himself, His people, and cause into the hands of His Father in entire confidence that, from His righteous character, all that is so committed to Him would be preserved in perfect safety.

The various clauses of this remarkable and most significant statement are worthy of special consideration, both separately and in their connection. It has been justly observed that in the Authorized Version a word which in the original is the opening word has been passed over without any rendering. This might be given—"Righteous Father, *although* the world hath not known Thee, I have known Thee." But, as in other passages of the New Testament, the same word is used in the way of opposition or contrast, and is rendered *yet*, so it may be taken here. The Saviour came to give eternal life through the knowledge of the Father and the Son, and had declared His will that all men should know and acknowledge Him as sent of the Father. *Yet* the world hath not known

and does not know Him. The Saviour, in the opening words of His address, takes encouragement from the character of the Father to whom He prays, to look for the sure accomplishment of all His desires. He styles Him significantly—“*Righteous Father*,” it may be with reference to the unbelieving world that had not known Him and His boundless love, and the enemies that opposed Him, and His cause and people, and from whose hands He was soon to undergo embittered sufferings. The expressive epithet rather has respect to the stipulations of the eternal covenant. The Father had engaged that He would reward the obedience unto death of the Surety, with all covenant-help in His work, and would render it successful for diffusing the knowledge of God throughout the earth, and for the conversion of the world to Christ. Jehovah’s perfect righteousness was pledged to confer all the good that the Father had promised in the covenant, for restoring the innumerable rich blessings which the Son, by His obedience and death, merited. Therefore, though the Saviour saw the world yet lying in darkness, Himself exposed to debasement and agonizing suffering, and His people poor and oppressed, He did not fail nor was He discouraged. He had assured confidence in His God and Father that all the ends of His undertaking would yet be accomplished. He does not distrust Jehovah, nor think of abandoning His work. Through the painful sufferings and ignominious death which He was to undergo, He would receive the answer of all His prayers; judgment would be set in the earth; the “isles should wait for His law;” and instead of darkness and sin, and wrong-doing universally prevalent, “righteousness and peace would spring up before all nations.”



The Redeemer presents in full view the grand impediment to effecting this blessed design when He says, "*the world hath not known Thee.*" This refers to the past as well as the present condition of the world alien from God and unbelieving in Christ. There is no blessing or salvation without the true knowledge of God, and of this for ages past the world in all its aspects has been destitute. This is "the veil of the covering" enveloping all people—the "gross darkness" that has overspread all nations. This was the sad condition of the world's population when the Saviour uttered the words of this prayer, and such He foresaw it would continue for many generations after. His atoning sacrifice for the world's redemption was offered, and the gospel of the kingdom was preached throughout the earth. The Gentile nations, immersed in idolatry and vice, were in midnight darkness, and sat in the shadow of death. They "*did not like to retain God in their knowledge,*" and therefore were they given up to gross ignorance and abominable wickedness. In the best state of ancient heathendom, and among the most favoured classes, this deep-rooted ignorance of God was unrelieved. "The world by wisdom knew not God." "Boasting themselves to be wise, they became fools."\* They were "alienated from God by wicked works,"—"without God and without hope in the world." The Jews, too, though God's peculiar people, and favoured above all others with a revelation of His character and will—ignorant of God's spirituality and sovereign grace, "went about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of faith." Blindness in

\* This is the literal rendering of the original participle (*phaskontes*).



part happened to Israel, which remained till the day of future discovery. And after "the mystery hidden for ages" was unfolded by the death of Christ, and the gospel was preached to all nations, this ignorance of the true God and of the way of salvation continued, as it yet does, to characterise by far the largest portion of the world's population. Still it is true, as in the Saviour's complaint, "The world does not know Thee." The appeal here to the "righteous Father," as Head in the covenant-engagement, in which the Mediator was set up "a Light to lighten the Gentiles," and to be "the salvation of His people Israel," is like the petition of the church, as expressed by the Psalmist,\*—"Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." In view of the world's wide-spread and long-continued spiritual darkness, the Saviour consoles Himself in the thought that this ignorance of God is not *total*, and that ample provision has been made for the world becoming fully enlightened. The participle is strongly emphatic. There is yet such thick and almost universal darkness, but the case is not hopeless. The "true light has been manifested," which shall continue to shine with ever-increasing brightness, until the "glory of the Lord shall be fully revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." †

"But I have known 'Thee,'" and these—apostles, ministers, and a people that believe through their word—"have known that Thou hast sent me." They have been rescued from a state of ignorance of God, and brought to the knowledge of salvation—as

\* Ps. lxxiv. 20.

† This is the literal meaning of the original Greek participle.

*“ I have declared unto them Thy name ; ”* and in order to a much wider diffusion, and the attainment of yet higher degrees of saving knowledge, He adds,—“ I will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.” The Saviour expresses in these pregnant statements three or four precious and most important truths, which are intimately connected with the great matters of this prayer—the eminent privileges of His people, and the great ends to be effected by the disclosure of the plan of human redemption. In contrast with the world’s ignorance of God, and consequent misery, He declares—

1. “ But I have known Thee.” This is claiming for Himself the immediate perfect knowledge of the Father—that which consists in identity of nature, the possession of the same fulness and attributes, and Divine endeared fellowship. He is, moreover, the great central light to communicate this knowledge to others. “ All things are delivered to the Son ; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” As one of the persons of the Godhead, the Son knows all things, and especially has He the most perfect acquaintance with the nature, perfections, purposes, and works of Godhead. In the covenant-appointment, He was set up from everlasting, as the Revealer to the world of the things of God. He is the true light to irradiate every one in the world who is savingly enlightened. He alone reveals the Divine nature and character and works to the world—“ No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” John i. 18. The Saviour, so

speaking of Himself, in contrast with the world lying in utter and profound ignorance of God, exults in the possession of this knowledge as a chief element of His felicity—" *I have known Thee,*"—as having been in thy bosom from eternity. I know Thee in thine unchanging character and perfections, as my Father and God, and the Rock of my salvation; and I will know Thee for ever, in sustaining and accepting my work on earth, and in glorifying me with Thyself with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

2. The Saviour further rejoices and praises the *Father because some had been gathered out of the world's darkness, and by Him brought to the true and saving knowledge of God's name.* "These have known that Thou hast sent me." The reference may be primarily to the apostles and ministers of the word—those whom He had selected and called, and qualified to make known the mystery of His will for the obedience of faith among all nations. But it includes likewise all who by the influence of the Spirit, brought to know God savingly, are rescued from the power of darkness, and "translated to the kingdom of His dear Son." These, as being taught of God, share in the Saviour's experimental, joy-inspiring knowledge of the Father. Amidst a world that persists in ignorance and infidelity, they know the Father as manifested in the Son. They believe in His mediatorial mission and work, and thus acquaint themselves with God and are at peace.† This knowledge is well pleasing to God; it is eternal happiness begun, and destined to increase more and more till it ripens into glory.

\* Job xxii. 22.

3. This high and honourable privilege ministers and believers possess, *through the Saviour Himself communicating it to them*. He claims this as His peculiar prerogative, and exhibits it as the special work which He has already performed, and in which He will ever delight. Christ had effectually led His disciples to the right knowledge of God; and, rejoicing in His work, He promises to do this yet more and more. God's *name* is Himself, and all by which He manifests His character, perfections, and purposes of wisdom and love. This is the name which He spoke of before, as having manifested it to the men who were given Him out of the world. This He had declared by the revelation given to His servants from the beginning, and by His personal ministry, miracles, and example. The apostles and the ministers of the word were sent forth to make known Jehovah's name for the salvation of sinners. And all true believers, who know God's name, are appointed to declare it by their words and lives, that others who are in darkness may be led to know it, and to place their confidence in it for help, and comfort, and blessing. Chiefly through the mission and work of the Spirit has the Saviour declared, and will yet more fully declare God's name, for the comfort and hope of His people, and the salvation of the world. His office is to bring men out of darkness into God's marvellous light. He guides into all truth. He savingly reveals the Father, and glorifies Christ by taking the things which are His and subjectively showing them to His people. He "teaches them all things, and brings all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ has said unto them."\*

\* John xiv. 26.



He is the promised Paraclete, to abide with them for ever. The convincing, enlightening, sanctifying declaration of God's name is through the agency of the Spirit. All the saving knowledge that has ever been in the world is through His powerful, gracious operation. And all the bright and wonderful discoveries which will yet be made in our world by the Saviour of the Father's name will be through the plentiful outpouring of the Spirit. This is the grand promise of the last times; in its fulfilment, the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest. Then "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." \*

4. The blessed *end* of this continued declaration of God's name is exhibited in the singularly affecting last words—"That the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." This does not properly mean that God's people might firmly believe the love of the Father to the Son, or that the love of God should be shed abroad in their hearts. Rather it intends that the Father might love Christ's servants, as He loved their Lord and Master.† The phrase expresses the great purpose to be served by the revelation of the Father's name. His love was set upon the Son, and He knew the Father, that He might make known His character and purposes for the spiritual illumination of sinners

\* Habakkuk ii. 44 ; Isaiah xxx. 26.

† This is well put by *Calvin*—"Ut amor quo me amplexus es, ad eos usque se diffundet."



and for the world's conversion. Christians to whom God's name is revealed by the Spirit are called to the same work, by the doing of which they continue in His love, even as Christ did His Father's commandments and continued in His love. The Father's favour and love of complacency are toward them who do the work of Christ on earth, and are co-labourers with Him in the cause of the universal diffusion of the Divine glory.

The last words, consisting of three brief monosyllables—" *I in them*," are most weighty and significant. Here is summed up and brought out all the purpose for which He had declared by His word and Spirit the Father's name to His people, and the grand final end of the Father's love towards and resting upon them. It was that Christ might be in them, and they in Him, by a vital union, and constant mutual abiding. They are to live in Him, as He comes to dwell in them and walk in them. The Comforter whom He sends was to abide in them for ever; His word was to dwell in them "richly in all wisdom." He works mightily in them, and they were to go forth and work by Him. All their duty and interest, privilege and happiness, for time and eternity, lie here. The whole success of their work in the earth for the promotion of the glory of God, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, depends on His dwelling in their hearts by faith, and on the power of the Spirit of God working by them. The truth of Christ in their hearts is a living power to elevate their minds, and transform their moral nature, and is mighty through their instrumentality to "the pulling down of strongholds." Christ is in them—their present comfort and joy, and their hope of glory. This is the glorious and

blessed issue of all the Saviour's undertaking and work on behalf of His ransomed ones; this the full answer of all His prayers for them, seen in that perfect and inconceivable communion which they are destined to enjoy with Him for ever. The summit of the saint's heavenly felicity will consist in the Father's name, which was declared to them, being perfectly known, His complacential love fully enjoyed by them, and all terminating in the Saviour's design and gracious assurance—the end of all His purposes and dealings toward them realised for ever. “AND I IN THEM.” In the simple but expressive words of the excellent *Matthew Henry*—“Christ here repeats what He had said a little before (ver. 23), and the prayer closes with it, to show how much the heart of Christ was set upon it. All His petitions centre in this, and with this, *the prayers of Jesus the son of David are ended*. ‘I in them;’ let me have this, and I desire no more. It is the glory of the Redeemer to dwell in the redeemed; it is His *rest for ever*, and He has *desired it*. Let us therefore make sure our union with Christ, and then take the comfort of His intercession. This prayer had an end, but that He ever lives to make.” \*

The inadequate exposition which has been given of the Saviour's last prayer, before He entered on the scene of His agonising sufferings, may be suitably concluded with the closing sentences of one of the most practical of the Puritan Divines. †

“Thus at length we have despatched this heavenly

\* Henry's Exposition on John xvii. 26.

† Rev. George Newton—“Exposition with Notes,” on John xvii. Delivered in Sermons preached weekly on the Lord's Day to the Congregation in Taunton Magdalene.

prayer of our great High Priest and Intercessor, Jesus Christ. He was ever ready to go forth and suffer when He made it. Methinks I hear Him saying to His apostles and disciples, 'The time is now at hand that I must leave you, and be taken from the earth; come let us pray before we part;' and then, withal, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and poured out those holy breathings of His spirit for Himself and them. Oh! what a blessed frame of heart! Oh! what a choice and raised temper was He in at that time! Oh! what a prayer must that be that was made by such a person, in such a company, on such an occasion! Christ was in heaven in His thoughts and affections when He uttered it; and we have seemed sometimes to be in heaven too, while we have handled it and heard it. Well, it hath been as sweet and precious a subject as ever we have dwelt upon. I desire you to review it often, and let not any choice impressions that have been made upon you by it, out again. Let them not be like lines drawn upon the sand—no sooner formed than defaced; like water spilt upon the ground, that is not to be gathered up again. Here you have seen the heart of Jesus Christ opened, and His affections plentifully flowing out to His people. Our prayers show our hearts to Christ; His prayer shows His heart to us. Here you have seen how our dear Friend, our Head, our Husband loved us, and had us in His mind and thought before He died. Us, I say who now believe, as well as them that did believe in former times. How earnest and importunate He is with God the Father, that we may be *one* here, and that we may be in one place hereafter! Oh! let us search into the heart of Jesus Christ, laid open to us in this abridg-

ment of His intercession for us, that we may know it and the workings of it continually more and more, until at length this precious prayer come to have its full effect, and we be taken up to be for ever with the Lord, that where He is, there we may be also." Amen.

It was at first designed to publish the following condensed Treatise on Prayer as a separate work, but it has been considered better to give it as Part II. of the Treatise on the Intercession of Christ, thus bringing out the practical application of that great doctrine, and showing the unspeakable importance of prayer to the church and the world at the present momentous era.

## PART II.

# A BRIEF TREATISE ON PRAYER.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

### HUMAN PRAYER—OUR GRAND DUTY AND PRIVILEGE.

THE intercession of the exalted Saviour in heaven, its prevalency, and the benefits and blessings which flow from it, are ever represented in the Scriptures as being most intimately connected with prayer offered by men to God on earth. The throne of grace on earth to which human suppliants are encouraged to come with boldness, is nearly related to the golden altar in heaven, at which our Advocate, the Angel of the Covenant, stands with the sacerdotal censer in His hands to present the prayers of saints sent up from earth, and to give them efficacy and success by intermingling them with the incense of His mediation.

The light of nature and the voice of conscience have universally declared the duty of prayer. Men, even in the lowest state of heathen darkness, have



felt and acknowledged their dependence on a Supreme Being, and have had recourse to Him by prayers and offerings, in order to deprecate His wrath, escape His displeasure, and to obtain benefits from Him to supply their need. The educated races of pagan idolaters, equally with the lowest and most degraded, offered some kind of worship to superior beings, and sought their interposition for deliverance and blessing. In all Mohammedan countries, by the voice of public proclamation, the people are called repeatedly to daily prayer. As *Cicero* declares,\* that there is no nation on earth so barbarous as to have no gods which they worship, so *Plutarch* testifies that, "in traversing the world," one may find cities without walls, or kings, or wealth, and without schools and theatres; but a city without a temple, or that does not practise worship, prayers, and the like, no one ever found! Sceptical philosophers and infidels, when exposed to imminent dangers and in immediate prospect of death, have not unfrequently had recourse in their extremity to prayer to the Being whose existence they before denied, and whose word and law they disobeyed and contemned.†

Considering God as our Creator, Preserver, and Moral Governor, in whom we live, move, and have our being, and on whom we are absolutely dependent for life and all support and blessing, then prayer, which is the devout movement of the soul toward Him, is not only our great duty, but also our constant necessity. What the voice of conscience

\* *De Natura Deorum.*

† This conduct was singularly seen in the case of *Voltaire* in his last illness.

proclaims as man's first duty, Divine revelation inculcates throughout in the plainest terms, and enforces by the most constraining motives and most powerful sanctions. It moreover teaches, what human reason and science cannot do—*how to pray*, and exhibits prayer as our highest privilege. Prayer is represented as the soul's fellowship with God—the approach of adopted children to a Father, who loves and pities them; the outpouring of the heart to Him who delights to hear prayer, and who is more ready to give than His people are to seek the blessing, and to do exceeding abundantly above all that they are able to ask or think.

The duty and privilege of prayer are exhibited with impressive fulness and clearness in two pregnant declarations of the word: the one of our Lord to His apostles in the upper chamber on the night of His betrayal, and the other of the apostle Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews. John xiv. 13, 14—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." Hebrews iv. 16—"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in our time of need." Here the wondrous provision of acceptance with God and blessing, is set before us in the most condescending and attractive aspect. We have the throne of grace, on which, like the ancient propitiatory in the Tabernacle, sits One ever ready to receive suppliants, and to confer upon them covenant blessings. By no distant pilgrimages or bodily sacrifices are we required to approach it. It is brought very near to us, and is ever in view. To the most glorious throne in the universe we are invited and encouraged to come; and thither we are

ever welcome to approach with holy boldness, and all freedom of access. The object of our coming to the throne is to us of unspeakable value and transcending importance, “that we may receive mercy,\* and find *seasonable* help in weakness and for all labour and trial.” Ours is ever “the time of need”—in youth, in the vigour of manhood, in the debility of age, in sickness, temptation, and death, in all the relations and business of life, in work for advancing God’s glory in the earth, in sufferings for His cause, in internal trials for the increase of light, and faith, and peace, and joy, and the powerful revival of the Spirit, we have constant access to the mercy seat; and we are assured of seasonable, suitable help from Him who sits thereon. Our most pressing duty and highest privilege is to repair to it with all freedom and confident expectation, with all our wants, in every place, in all emergencies and distresses, for strength in work, and conflict, and victory. There is no interposing veil now to bar our access into the holiest of all. He who dwells between the cherubim has no set hours for audience. He is ever ready to hear and help, and to every needy suppliant He bends patiently His ear. The connection between the duty and the privilege is most marked in the Saviour’s assurance; and the blessing to be obtained in prayer is most comprehensive and abundant—“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.” The great duty of prayer is *asking*, as children a father, in the name of Christ. The extent of the privilege is indicated—“*Whatsoever*,” all that the suppliant requires, and that is becoming the Father to give. This it is doubly promised shall be given.

\* So the original word may best be translated.

And this granting of such large and numerous requests, instead of being through constraint or reluctance, will bring a revenue of glory to the Father and the Son—"That the Father may be glorified in the Son." Such being the duty and privilege of prayer, we proceed to consider the subject in the following Chapters.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE NATURE AND OBLIGATIONS OF PRAYER.

PRAYER has been briefly described as the human soul's communion with God—the Father of our spirits. It is not merely a mental conception or a conclusion of the understanding, but is the devout movement of the soul and of all its powers toward God. As the spirit and essence of true religion, prayer is the conscious recognition of God as He is revealed in all important relations, as Creator, Sovereign, Ruler, and Judge—God in Covenant, the God of providence and grace and glory. Whether verbal or unuttered, it is the expression of the feelings and desires which the sense of these relations is calculated to excite. In the language of one of the Continental Divines—"Prayer is petition conjoined with ardent desire, whether we employ words or not, by which we seek from God the things which He has commanded in His word to be sought arising from the knowledge and true sense of our mercies, and the desire of the Divine beneficence, accompanied with humility, and penitence, and confession of our unworthiness, made in true turning to God, and in trust in Divine promises through Christ the Mediator."\* The Westminster Divines, in the *Larger Catechism* (Quest. 178), define prayer as "The offering up of our desires unto God in the name of Christ, by the help

\* *Miskries*—*Christianæ Doctrinæ Compendium*. See *Commentarie Catechetici*—Pars. III., De Piecatione, p. 822.



of His Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." And the *Shorter Catechism* declares the *matter* of prayer, when it adds that the desires presented to God are "for things agreeable to His will." In terms the most suitable and expressive, one of the English Reformers, *John Bradford*, the martyr under Queen Mary, says—"Prayer is a simple, unfeigned, humble ardent opening of the heart before God; wherein we either ask things needful or give thanks for benefits received." Whichever of these definitions is adopted, it is apparent that prayer involves, in its essential idea, the whole of religion in the soul, and that a person whose spirit and life are without prayer, is, in every sense, irreligious. We are expressly told that—"Without faith it is impossible to please God;" and as prayer is the natural and grand expression of faith, if it is absent we are unbelieving, and deserved objects of God's displeasure.

There are certain *prerequisites* to prayer without which we cannot engage aright in the exercise, or in the want of which the petitions which we present will remain unanswered, and be unproductive of advantage or blessing. These respect God, to whom prayer is addressed, and ourselves as suppliants. Prayer is a Divine ordinance, and the instituted means of obtaining blessings that we need; supposes God's *Personality*—that *He is ever near to us*, and that *He exercises absolute authority and control over us and all creatures*. He has supreme authority over all that affects us in body and mind, that contributes to our safety, and that ministers to our wants and happiness here and hereafter. Material force or natural law cannot possibly be worshipped; none but an intelligent person can be the object of desire and love and

trust, and one with whom the soul can hold converse in prayer. He must, moreover, be ever near to those who call upon Him, that He may hear and answer their requests, and minister to them the needed help and blessing. His absolute control over all persons, elements, and forces is required, that He may be able to answer aright the manifold petitions that are presented at His throne of power.

Prayer always takes for granted the intelligent belief that God, to whom prayer is addressed, is all-sufficient to meet every case that is brought before Him, and to supply all our wants and necessities; that He is ever ready and willing, out of His immeasurable and inexhaustible fulness, to communicate all the good that we need; and that He has ordained prayer as the chief and eminent way of obtaining it. "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him; to all that call upon Him in truth." "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."\*

The *prerequisites of prayer on our part* are a deep sense of our wants, and our inability to relieve them. Sinful and fallen, of ourselves we are all want, have manifold defects, and are exposed to evils of all kinds, both in soul and body, in our spiritual and temporal condition. For these wants there is no adequate supply in ourselves, or in any creature. Against dangers that threaten us we have no protection; as from distresses and calamities that assail us we cannot work effectual deliverance. It concerns us to know the *greatness* of our wants, and to *feel their*

\* Heb. xi. 6; Psalm lxxv. 2; Psalm cxlv. 18; Jer. xxxiii. 3.

*weight and pressure*, that we may be led earnestly to seek deliverance. Prayer, it has been justly said, is “the language of our own sinful infirmities and necessities.” The “longing soul,” it is promised, the Lord will “satisfy”—the “hungry soul He will fill abundantly.” We need to know our wants, and the evils to which we are exposed to be such, that only the Lord Himself can effectually relieve us. We never pray aright, or duly expect and receive blessing from the throne of grace, till we are impelled by felt necessity to have recourse to it, and are made sensible that none but He who sits upon it can relieve and save us. From “the depths” we cry to Him, and He hears and graciously answers. He “draws us from many waters that threaten to overwhelm us ;” feeling that we are wretched and miserable, and that the help of man is vain, we come to God, in whose name is our sure and all-sufficient help, encouraged by His word of assured promise—“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” \*

The *nature* of prayer may be seen in the *different parts* of prayer, and in the various *Scripture representations* that are given of it. The parts are *invocation*—calling on God’s name, for the help and blessing which we need, and which His glorious name assures us He is honoured in bestowing; *adoration*—ascribing to Him all Divine perfections, and seeking Him to engage them on our behalf; *petition* or supplication for good; *deprecations* for averting evils that are dreaded; and *thanksgivings* for benefits received; the expression of gratitude, and of our obligations to the duties of new obedience.

\* Psalm l. 15.

By numerous and pregnant expressions is prayer set forth in the Scriptures. It is *asking*, from a sense of want and necessity; in deep humility, as an inferior coming to a superior—as a needy beggar, seeking with earnestness a supply for a pressing necessity. It is *seeking* with care and perseverance for something that is missing, and that is felt to be of great value. It is *knocking* with importunity, pressing the suit with force and vehemency, amid delays, against opposition, and assaults, and despite of fears and disappointment. Prayer is the “lifting up of the soul to God, above whatever would distract or clog its movements, and in spiritual thoughts and desires to God, infinitely exalted as He is above all creatures.” It is the “pouring out” of the heart before God\*—implying that the work is chiefly heart work; that all that is in the heart should be uttered in penitent confession, earnest desire, joyful praise, and holy resolution in the Divine presence. It is *speaking* to God, and communing with Him as a man with His friend. Prayer is *wrestling* with God—striving with Him, *taking hold of Him*, and *inquiring* after Him, importing, struggling against difficulties, and firm opposition to evils and enemies; anxious concern to obtain the good desired, holy violence and importunity, faith in God’s omniscience, and confidence in Divine direction and in gracious answers. By significant bodily actions, and brief, emphatic expressions, prayer is set forth in the word, descriptive of its nature and characteristic of its object and value. It is spoken of as the *spreading forth*, *stretching out*, and *lifting up* of the hands; it is *bowing* the knee, *falling down*, thus indicating the

\* Psalm lxii 8.



frame and attitude of the soul, in reverence and prostrate humility, in faith, entire dependence on God, and eager expectation and hope. Prayer is *crying unto the Lord, crying with the voice, sighing, groaning, weeping, breathing*. These and many similar expressions<sup>e</sup> are the Scripture representations of spiritual thoughts and desires after God, of the great sense of necessity and danger which real prayer imports, and of the greatness and excellency of the benefits it is the sole appointed medium of obtaining. They moreover imply that right prayer is an absorbing exercise, which engages and draws forth all the faculties of the soul in their highest exercise, and lays the whole man under contribution in sustained effort to attain the benefits sought and the greatly desired blessing.

#### OBLIGATIONS TO PRAYER.

These are manifold and weighty. They arise from our relation to God as creatures, from the reiterated commands of Scripture, from many approved examples in the word, from the new nature of believers—their duties, wants, enemies, privileges, hopes, and prospects, and from the neglect of prayer being charged as a heinous and aggravated sin, which is visited by sure and awful judgments. Not only is prayer held out in the Bible as a special duty and precious means of grace,—it is represented as the sum of all the duties which we owe to God, and as the first and chief of the duties which we owe to our neighbour and ourselves. The grace which brings salvation, “teaches us to live *godly* ;” and the spirit and life of true godliness are eminently seen in devotional aspirations and habitual prayer. As creatures, we are dependent on God for life,



support, and all blessing. As fallen, sinful, and helpless, we need pardon and deliverance from sin and misery. Prayer is the only proper confession of God's greatness and sovereignty, and of man's entire dependence on Him for help and blessing. To neglect prayer is at once unnatural and atheistic; to be prayerless, is to be "without God, and without hope in the world." We are commanded by Him who speaks with supreme authority, to ask, seek, knock in prayer—to pray without ceasing, in all circumstances and conditions to call on God's name—to be instant in prayer, to pray always and not faint, and "in everything by prayer and supplication to make our requests known to God with thanksgiving." God, who perfectly knows the individual cases of all His creatures, and who has ever a supreme regard to His own glory, has ordained prayer as the selected mode of gracious communion with His creatures; and therefore does He enjoin this duty with all authority, and under the most solemn sanctions. The grand doctrine of revealed religion—God in Trinity, is made known to us, so as to require prayer, and encourage us in its observance. God the Father is the "Hearer of Prayer;" the eternal Son, our Saviour, is our way to the Father, a condescending and effectual Intercessor; and the Holy Spirit is our Intercessor within—the spirit of grace and supplication—"the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The true saving knowledge of God and Christ, which is life eternal, is inseparable from acquaintance with Him, by fellowship in prayer offered, heard, and graciously answered. The Bible, from beginning to end, is full of the record of believing prayers presented, and of answers given by God, in manifold deliverances wrought and blessings con-

ferred. Thus ever are saints and approved servants mainly characterised, and thus have God's designs of mercy and judgment to individuals and communities been chiefly accomplished." "By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation."\* The new spiritual nature of the redeemed, and their new covenant relation to the God of salvation, require and most forcibly enjoin prayer. It is the breath and the pulse of the spiritual life—the joy of a ransomed soul in its newly acquired liberty; the cleaving of the heart of a child to its Father; the expression of the heartfelt need for deliverance and help in all duties and trials; the earnest and increasing aspirations of the soul after holiness and complete conformity to God. Ignorance and neglect of prayer are ever marked as the main characteristic of the wicked; and as the ground of their rejection and final doom, these exhibit the unspeakable importance of the duty, and urge to its constant performance. These obligations are *universal*, extending to persons of every class, and in all conditions; and they are *perpetual*, continuing to life's end, and only ceasing when time shall have given place to an unchangeable eternity—when saints shall have laid aside the vials of prayer, and taken up the harps of praise; and when, in the case of the wicked, consigned to torment, prayers either by them or for them are alike unavailing.

The obligation to prayer is not merely that of submission to the command of a superior, on whom we are dependent; it is that of gratitude to a Benefactor to whom we are indebted for benefits the most excellent and valuable. It is observable

\* Psalm lxxv. 5.

that in the law of Moses there is no direct command and no specific directions concerning prayer. It is, strictly speaking, *less a duty than a privilege*, which the gospel of grace and love calls and encourages us to enjoy. It reveals to us a reconciled God waiting to be gracious; it opens up a new and living way of access into the immediate Divine presence. We are given "exceeding great and precious promises," that we may rely upon them, and plead them for the blessings we need, under the assurance that the Divine faithfulness is pledged for their performance. The Mediator and heavenly Advocate is ever ready to present our petitions to the Father, intermixed with the fragrant incense of His mediation; and His intercession constantly avails to procure an answer of peace. How amazing the condescension of the Hearer of Prayer, who, as He sits on the throne of grace, bends His ear to the prayer of the meanest suppliant, and even the groanings unutterable of the contrite and wounded heart obtain with Him favour and acceptance. At all times, and in all cases, we are welcome to enter the audience chamber; we are invited to have fellowship with the Father of our spirits, casting all our care upon Him, pouring out our hearts before Him, and conversing with Him face to face, as a man with his friend. Who can conceive the honour and blessedness of such a provision? Who can declare the greatness and excellency of the benefits which it confers? "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that He may dwell in Thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy temple." \*

\* Psalm lxxv. 4.

Prayer is an eminent *means of grace*. Like the word and sacraments, it was ordained as a medium of communicating spiritual life-giving and sanctifying influence to the soul. Not only is it the fixed condition on which the blessings sought are conferred, it brings near to God, the fountain of good; and the thirsty soul is satisfied with the water of life and salvation. Prayer leads into converse with the God of grace and glory; and this excites into exercise faith, love, gratitude, and all other gracious affections. The Spirit descends to quicken and elevate, when He is sought in prayer; and as the Saviour on the mount was transfigured when He prayed, so are His people in prayer transformed. They draw near to God, and He draws near to them, making discoveries of His glory, shedding abroad His love in their hearts, filling them with joy and peace in believing, and giving them earnest of the glory to be revealed.

Prayer, as a high privilege, has been fitly compared to the *telegraph* which conveys with lightning speed messages between friends to remote lands, and speedily returns the answer; or to the *telephone*, which makes the well-known voices of friends, far distant, to be heard in accents of mutual praise and of sympathy and affection. Prayer is such an instrument that opens and maintains a real intercourse between heaven and earth. There is no place or condition from which this Divine way of communion is excluded. If we come in the appointed way, there are no mistakes in the transmission, such as may occur in the outward instrument. We may rest assured that the messages will be heard on high, our prayers shall come into God's temple, and we need not fear delay in the return. Everywhere, an

earnest, needy suppliant may lay at once his hands on the key of this wondrous instrument. Break or derangement can never take place. Constant access and constant success are the privilege of all who come unto God through the Mediator. "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." \*

Such being the duty, privilege, and obligations of prayer, who should not regard it as the great and all-important work of life? Who will not betake himself to it, as the sure and joyful way of attaining blessing and felicity?

\* Isaiah lxv. 24.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE OBJECT AND WAY OF PRAYER.

IN considering particularly the ordinance of prayer as revealed in the word, there are *three* questions which seem to demand an explicit answer. These are—1, Who are to pray? 2, To whom is prayer to be made? and 3, In whose name is prayer to be offered? In answering aright these inquiries, we may be led to feel deeply our personal concern in the matter; be made sensible of a right frame of spirit for the acceptable performance of the duty, and obtain high encouragement for engaging in it.

#### I.—WHO ARE TO PRAY?

Already it has been shown that the obligation to prayer is *universal* and *perpetual*. The proper answer to the inquiry, “Who are to pray?” is, that all men while living on the earth are obliged to pray to God. The neglect of this duty is charged against them as sin, and the ground of their rejection and condemnation. It is admitted by all who read the Bible, and are acquainted with the way of salvation which it reveals, that believers should regard it as their great work on earth, as well as their highest privilege, to pray without ceasing, and in everything by prayer and supplication to make their requests known to God with thanksgiving. But whether the duty is obligatory on others—on the unregenerate and wicked, has been questioned and denied by some. Such persons generally live without God in the

world, own not their dependence upon Him, and in their pride of heart refuse to call upon His name. Others, from Scripture difficulties on the subject, appear to doubt whether the command to pray is addressed to the wicked; while a class of sectaries and separatists, who lay claim to extraordinary piety, openly and strongly deny that the unregenerate should pray. Taking partial and one-sided views of the duty, and overlooking and perverting passages of the Scriptures, they urge that as the unregenerate cannot pray in faith, their engaging in prayer is disallowable and sinful; that as they are unable to address God as their Father in heaven, they are precluded from using the model prayer which Christ taught His disciples. A full and satisfactory answer may be readily furnished to all such objections. The duty is required by the light of nature. Prayer is a part of the natural worship of God, and it is therefore obligatory on all. Unregenerate persons are bound to all the duties enjoined in the moral law; and the fact of their being sinful does not free them from the obligation to pray. On the contrary, their neglect of a natural duty involves them in greater sin. The omission of prayer is ascribed in Scripture to the depravity of the heart, and characterised as insolent contempt of God, and rebellion against Him, and so marked as visited with His wrathful displeasure. The Divine command to pray is often repeated, as addressed to men of every class, irrespective of character, whether regenerate or unregenerate; and many instances are recorded in the word, of God hearing and answering their prayers, even when their persons were not accepted by Him. Simon Magus, though in "the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," is directed by the apostle "to pray

to God that the thought of his heart may be forgiven him." \* At the prayer of the king and people of Nineveh, when they "fasted and cried mightily to God," the vengeance threatened against the city was averted. And when Ahab humbled himself before God, the punishment denounced against him was mitigated and deferred.† Prayer is an ordained means whereby persons are brought out of their natural state—convinced and converted to God. If unregenerate persons may not pray, neither should they use other means, such as the reading or hearing of the word. Faith is required to the profitable use of these means, as well as to prayer. If unregenerate persons should not pray for themselves neither may they join with others in praying for them in public and private, and thus will they be excluded from all ordinances, social and public. They are freed from the obligation to acknowledge God in all their ways, or to seek to be led by Him in the course which He approves. Living prayerless, they do not sin, while they live "without God in the world." A theory which is so palpably opposed to the light of nature and the dictates of the inspired word, and which leads to such evil consequences, deserves rejection and the strongest reprobation. When the prayer of the wicked is declared to be "an abomination" to the Lord, this is said of prayer which is hypocritical, and offered with evil dispositions and for evil ends. The Scriptures declare that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord." ‡ Yet it

\* Acts viii. 22.

† See Ps. cvii. 6, 14, 19, 20, 29; Jonah iv.; Gen. xxi. 17; 1 Kings xxi. 27-29.

‡ Prov. xxviii. 9.

cannot be denied that, under the law, unregenerate persons were required to offer sacrifices. Again, it is declared, "The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord;"\* yet this cannot be held as exempting such from all duties—natural, domestic, and civil. Though "the ploughing of the wicked" is represented as "sin," yet the neglect of this natural duty may be shown to be sin more aggravated. So, altogether to neglect prayer, which is a natural duty, is a sin more aggravated than to pray with an insincere heart and a hypocritical spirit. The preface to the prayer which Christ taught His disciples was prescribed to Judas, one of the twelve, who was yet unregenerate, and he doubtless addressed God as his Father in heaven, though he knew nothing of the spirit of adoption. All human beings are bound to acknowledge God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and may pray to Him as the Father of their spirits—their Creator, Upholder, and Benefactor. If unregenerate persons may not pray because they are destitute of saving faith, then it follows that they should not read, or hear the word, which can only be done aright in the exercise of faith. Even believers themselves have not at all times assured confidence of being heard and graciously answered. Yet are they never exempted from the obligation to cry to God out of the depths, and to pray always and not faint. The unregenerate, though without true faith, may notwithstanding pray in the assured belief that prayer is a commanded duty, and that God is willing and ready to hear all that call upon Him—to relieve their distresses, and to send them answers for good.

\* Prov. xv. 9.



The prayers of the unregenerate being, accordant to God's will of command, are acceptable to Him. He that hears and relieves the irrational creatures—the young lions and the ravens, listens to the cry of perishing sinners, and hears the prayers of His people on their behalf. “They cry unto the Lord in trouble, and He delivers them out of their distresses. He leads them forth by the right way, that they may go to a city of habitation.” \*

## II.—THE OBJECT OF PRAYER.

God alone is the proper Object of all religious worship, and to Him exclusively prayer is to be addressed. He only is possessed of those Divine attributes which are involved in the ascription of praise and thanksgiving, and which are indispensably required to the hearing and answering of prayer. To Him “alone pertains the name Jehovah,”—self-existent, unchangeable, and all-sufficient. He is a covenant God, excelling in greatness, power, and glory—the God of all grace and mercy. He has perfect knowledge of the condition and wants of all His creatures, and He knows the inmost thoughts and desires of human hearts. He is able to deliver and save; all-sufficient to answer prayer and satisfy our longing desires. He is the fit object of all trust and confidence. “How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” He is reconciled in Christ; and to Him his adopted children may ever cry, “Abba, Father.” With wisdom and love far above all earthly parents, He knows how to give good gifts to them that ask Him. He only is “the Hearer of Prayer,” to whom all flesh are encouraged

\* Psalm cvii. 6.



to come; and all the blessings they need of deliverance, pardon, peace, sanctification, and full salvation, He is ever ready to give, and will be glorified in conferring.

God, the glorious Object of worship, is essentially One, while He is revealed in the Scriptures as existing in three distinct persons in the Godhead, distinguished by their personal properties. To each of these Persons belongs the same Divine, infinite, and indivisible essence, and they are equal in power and Godhead. The unity of God is the cardinal article of natural religion, while the doctrine of God in Trinity is the fundamental article of revelation. As properly it is the Divine essence subsisting in a personal God that is the object of worship; and prayer, in its full sense, is the soul's communion with God—ascribing to Him the glory due to His name, in thanksgiving, confession, and petition, and in trust in His perfections; then it is obvious that prayer may be distinctly addressed to any of the Persons of the Godhead, to the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Father. When God is represented as worshipped in the Bible—from the first revelation of the scheme of mercy—as the one exclusive Object of worship, it was as the triune God. Though the mystery of the Trinity was less clearly revealed under the old economy, it was apprehended by faith by the ancient fathers; and whichever Person of the Godhead was invoked in prayer, it was the one living and true God that was prayed unto, and He was always addressed as partaking of the same undivided Divine essence. Moses, and Abraham, and Jacob worshipped the angel of the covenant, the second Person of the Godhead. The blessing of Israel in the threefold

name\* was by the invocation of a covenant God, and was sought and expected from the personal operation of each of the persons of the blessed Trinity. The worship of the seraphim to “the King, the Lord of hosts,” which Isaiah saw in vision, was given to the thrice-holy name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; while yet the evangelist tells us that it had special regard to the Son, as the Saviour of sinners.† In the Song of Solomon—the record of the church’s converse and communion with God—the “Beloved” is frequently addressed in prayer, and the greatest blessings are directly sought from Him. Prayer, too, is directed immediately to the Holy Spirit, when the longing soul of the spouse earnestly cries—“Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out; let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.”‡

In the New Testament the doctrine of the Divine Tri-unity, as the sole Object of religious worship, is revealed with noontide clearness; and throughout, prayer is represented as addressed to the one Triune Jehovah, or to either of the separate Persons—Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. Prayer to the Saviour was constantly offered during His humiliation on earth, and was uniformly accepted by Him, and readily answered. Though abased in our nature, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and He ever claimed that “all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” The eastern “wise men” fell down and worshipped Him when He cradled in the manger; blind men prayed to Him; the leper came and worshipped Him;

\* Num. vi. 22, 23, 24.

† Isa. vi.

‡ Song iv. 16.

the ruler of the synagogue, the Syrophenician woman, the mother of the sons of Zebedee—all these directly worshipped the Saviour, and received from Him blessings which only a Divine person could confer. His disciples prayed to Him in distress, and were delivered. When they worshipped Him, saying, "Truly Thou art the Son of God," He did not reprove their approach as blasphemy; on the contrary, it was approved and accepted. After our Lord's resurrection, when He had entered on His state of exaltation, He is ever displayed as the Object of worship. The women who visited the empty sepulchre, came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Thomas exclaimed in adoration—"My Lord, and my God." The disciples at Bethany, as He was parted from them, and received up into heaven, "worshipped Him." When the assembled apostles selected one to fill the place of Judas, they appealed to the Saviour as the searcher of hearts, and prayed that He would show which of the two He had chosen. Stephen, in the highest act of believing resignation and trust, committed his departing spirit to Him. Apostolic prayers are pointed and full in seeking spiritual and saving blessings from Christ—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." The primitive Christians are represented as worshipping the living Saviour, and are designated those that "call on His name." Thus were Christians everywhere distinguished in apostolic times. *Eusebius* testifies—"Moreover, all the hymns and psalms of the brethren, from the beginning by the faithful, celebrate the praises of Christ, the word of God, and attribute Divinity to Him."

And *Pliny*, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, says, "The Christian's sang a hymn together, to Christ as God." The worship of saints on earth and in heaven, and of holy angels, is uniformly represented in the Book of Revelation as given to Christ. The enthroned Redeemer is never said to worship in heaven, but is exhibited as having adoration, praise, and thanksgiving addressed to Him.\* As God manifest in the flesh—Immanuel, God with us, He is the fit Object of worship; and as exalted in heaven, He can confer the Spirit, give repentance and the remission of sins, control and bring down all enemies, and confer all ascension gifts and salvation blessings. He is entitled to the heartfelt homage of all Christians; and when led and taught by the Spirit, they not only pray in Christ's name, but also directly present to Him adoration, confession, supplications, and thanksgiving, as they are made sensible of receiving from Him, in answer to prayer, deliverance, and manifold blessing.

The Holy Spirit, too, as being a Person in the Godhead, and in the economy of human redemption, entrusted with the application of all the benefits of the Saviour's purchase, is a proper object of prayer. In the initiatory sacrament of baptism, solemn dedication is made to Him, as to the Father and the Son, and saving blessings are equally sought from Him. The whole Christian profession is thus distinguished by a public authorised act of worship to the third Person of the Trinity. And in the apostolic benediction, the last petition is a solemn prayer to the Spirit, asking His gracious presence with believers, and His communication to them of all

\* Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 13.



spiritual and eternal blessings. The apposite and beautiful language of *Augustine* declares the Holy Spirit entitled to all Divine homage and worship—"If we were commanded to erect to the Holy Spirit a temple of wood and stone, for as much as God is the sole Object of worship, it would be a clear proof of His Divinity; how much clearer then is the proof, now that we are commanded not to erect one, but to be ourselves His temple!" The words of the doxology, familiar to the church in ancient and modern times, beautifully expresses the spirit of true devotion, in the ascription of adoration and praise to each Person of the Godhead—"GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY GHOST; AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE." AMEN.

While prayer is thus, both by Scripture precept and approved example, appropriately offered to each of the Persons of the Godhead; and there are special occasions in which express petitions to the Son and the Holy Spirit are suitable, and are followed by observable gracious answers; the usual mode of prayer, as exhibited in the word, is to pray to the first Person of the Trinity, through the Mediator, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit. When, in our Lord's model prayer, we are taught to address God as "Our Father which art in heaven," the title is rather to be taken as referring to God, essentially revealed as the Father of all flesh, and as God in covenant, than to a person in the Godhead. He is addressed as a Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the God of grace and love, the God of salvation. The revealed way of ordinary spiritual worship is to come to God the Father, as, in the economy of human redemption, He is the first cause



and Head in the wondrous scheme of salvation. He chose the elect, and gave them into the hand of the Mediator to be redeemed. Their help He laid upon "one that was mighty." The mediatorial appointment was His, as so was all the help administered to Him in His Surety-undertaking. His work was accepted of the Father, and He was "well pleased for His righteousness sake." The reward conferred upon the Saviour for His Surety-obedience is given by the Father, and so are all the blessings which His death purchased for His people. It is therefore in the highest degree suitable that He to whom the Redeemer prayed on earth, and with whom He continually pleads in heaven in behalf of His people, should be chiefly sought to in prayer, and in all acts of religious worship. We are invited and encouraged ever to come unto God by the "one Mediator." Thus, "we have access through Him, by one Spirit, to the Father."\* Our blessed Lord, in the days of His flesh, often addressed the first Person of the Godhead, the Head of the new covenant, as He prayed to the Father for promised support and deliverance in His undertaking, and for blessings to us. So ought we to come to Him through Christ, with child-like affection and confidence in "the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father"—saying, as He did, "Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation"†—assured that He will condescendingly hear, graciously answer, and withhold no good from them that fear Him. Our encouragement to come to God in prayer is great. The one Spirit *by* whom we come is ever ready to give effectual help in prayer, by implanting and stirring up holy desires,

\* Ephesians ii. 18.

† Psalm lxxxix. 26.

directing to the source of all needed grace, filling the mouth with arguments, sealing Divine promises, and applying the blessings purchased which we seek. Through the Son, as Mediator of the covenant both of reconciliation and intercourse, we come unto God. He is the ever-living and sure way of access. Ever ready to take our case in hand, He is our prevailing Advocate with the Father. Him He heareth always, and with Him He is ever well pleased. Never can He withhold from Him whatever His lips crave. How glorious and blessed is God, the Object of prayer! How gracious and abundant is the assurance that, coming to Him, sinful, needy, and helpless suppliants as we are, we shall not be cast out; we shall, through the Mediator, obtain all acceptance and blessing!

### CHAPTER III.

#### IN WHOSE NAME TO PRAY? AND WHO TEACHES TO PRAY?

THE Saviour Himself declares, in the plainest language, that prayer is to be presented exclusively in His name. He is the only way of access to God. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Once and again, in His last discourse of consolation to His disciples, He stated the grand principle of accepted and successful prayer—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."\* And, at the close of the discourse, to give the fullest assurance of gracious hearing and blessing to His people, He adds—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you."† From these reiterated assurances—so full and sustaining, it is readily seen that praying in Christ's name is a matter of great solemnity and transcendent importance. The words; in *Christ's name*, and *for Christ's sake*, are frequently used in petitions, in a mere formal manner, without any due feeling of heart, and have no definite meaning or purpose attached to them. Yet, properly understood, they are singularly pregnant and most significant. They express the whole way of acceptable approach to God in gospel worship, and as has been justly

\* John xiv. 13, 14.

† John xvi. 23.

remarked—"On these words hinge the whole power of prayer." According to Scripture usage, the name of Christ denotes His Person, His offices, and attributes, all His revealed relations to His people—Jesus, the Saviour, the Prophet, Priest, and King in the covenant. To pray in His name is accepting Him in His person and offices—to go unto God through Him. It is to rely on His atonement, intercession, and promise—to take Him as our only way to the Father; and, resting on His finished work and faithful word as the warrant and ground of our approach, to present our supplications, and pour out our hearts before God. Prayer in this manner is opposed to the want of conviction of the solemnity and weight of the duty, to all formality and indifference, and to unbelief in Divine promises. Prayer is not made in Christ's name when we do not put our petitions into His hand, that they may be presented by Him and accepted for His sake, and when we do not wholly depend upon Him for the success of our supplications, and for a gracious answer. To pray aright in the Saviour's name, we need various *prerequisites*. We must be duly sensible of our distance from God, of our guilt, defilement, and utter unworthiness. Christ Jesus must be known and recognised as the Mediator between God and man—the only way of access to God, and the ordained medium of acceptance and of all gracious intercourse and blessing. To ask in the name of Christ, we must know His name as our propitiation and peace, who has reconciled us to God by His blood, and who saves us by His life. And, as He will never suffer suppliants to take His name in vain, we only pray in His name when we ask what is agreeable to His will, and when we cherish

humble and assured confidence that petitions presented through Him will be heard and answered. We are warranted and encouraged to "come with boldness" through the blood of Jesus, and to "enter into the holiest of all." "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." \* As by nature we are guilty, and enemies to God by evil works, we can only be pardoned and accepted when we come to Him, embracing His well-beloved Son, and taking Him with us in making our approach to the Majesty in the heavens. It is related in Grecian history, that when *Themistocles* was an exile from Athens, in his wanderings, he came to the court of *Admetus*, king of *Eubus* (*Thessaly*), with whom he had been formerly at war, and on whom he had no possible claim for favour. As he entered the court of the palace, he caught up in his arms the son of the monarch, who fondly clung to his bosom, and kneeling in this attitude before the king, he obtained his request for forgiveness and favour—not on the ground of his own merits, but from the father's regard to the child of his affection. In like manner should we go to God in prayer. If we come indeed in Christ's name we cannot fail of acceptance; and whatever we ask for His sake shall assuredly be granted. "Him the father heareth always, and in Him He is ever well pleased."

We pray in Christ's name when we place *our whole dependence for acceptance*, and for the answer

\* 1 John v. 14, 15.



of our prayers, on *His finished work and continual intercession*. Through His atonement our guilt is cancelled, our persons are accepted, and we who were far off are brought nigh through His blood. Our petitions are heard and answered in the same way. We can only approach the altar of God through the blood of the great sacrifice; and the acceptance of our services, as well as of our persons, is entirely owing to the sweet incense of the Saviour's mediation. The intercession of Christ is properly His mediation continued and His atoning sacrifice applied. All the benefits which He purchased are in His hands to dispense, and these, in accordance with the stipulations of the covenant, He obtains from the Father on the footing of His completed undertaking. The firmest ground of dependence for acceptance and blessing is here, and of this we should continually avail ourselves in coming to God in prayer.

All our *strength for the duty is in Christ, and not in ourselves*; and it is communicated to us by the Spirit, which He has promised to give to them that ask Him. We are always weak in ourselves; and our chief infirmity lies in the spiritual exercise of prayer. We know not what to pray for, or how to order our supplications as we ought. By union to Christ, through the Spirit, we become one with Him, and we may draw upon His Almighty strength in offering our petitions at the mercy-seat. When Jacob wept and made supplication at Peniel, it was the angel that imparted the strength by which he prevailed, as well as communicated the blessing which he eagerly sought. In power imparted by Christ we have strength to plead, and we prevail in prayer. The Spirit helps our infirmities, and we become strong in

the Lord, and in the power of His might. Through our spiritual union with Christ, when He takes our case in hand, it is not so much our prayers that He presents to the Father as His own. He gives us His Spirit to move and draw out our hearts in holy desires and unutterable groanings; and what has been sent down from heaven ascends up again, as a cloud of fragrant incense to cover the mercy-seat. The golden vials are full of "odours, which are the prayers of saints." What fulness of seasonable help is here! and how abundant is the assurance that prayer offered in the name and strength of Christ shall prevail! "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." \*

\* We ask in Christ's name when *we embrace the promises of the covenant*, and plead *them at the throne of grace*. He is Himself "the mercy promised to the fathers;" and all help to His people is given in remembrance of it. The promises, "exceeding great and precious," absolute and unconditional, are "all yea and amen" in Him.† They were first made to Him personally in His obedience and suffering, as His people's Surety and Substitute; and now coming to believers as "tried words," they are to them the *conveyance deeds* of all the blessings of the covenant. His name is the "faithful and true witness," by whom we approach to God, and through whom He speaks to us when we embrace the promise, and use faith's plea on God's word—"Lord, do as Thou hast said." We have ample ground of confidence that what we ask in Christ's name shall be given us.

We "come with boldness to the throne of grace."

Our freedom and confidence in coming to *God rest wholly in praying in Christ's name*. This spirit is opposed to all slavish fear, and doubt and distress; it is openness of word and heart—the full confidence of children coming to a Father, in whose wise and tender love they can depend, and who is ever ready to help and relieve. In this “boldness” we are enjoined and encouraged ever to draw near to God. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way.”\* This gracious freedom and confidence in prayer is altogether through Christ, and His office and work in procuring it for us. Jesus, the Son of God, is our great High Priest, who has “passed through the heavens.” He has consecrated for us a “new and living way, through the veil” of His flesh, and He ever lives in heaven to make intercession. In His name, and relying upon Him, we may approach despite of everything, within or without, that would discourage or hold us back. With all heartiness and childlike confidence, we may ever ask in the name of our blessed Advocate and Intercessor—“In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.”†

We, finally, pray in Christ's name when we *put our petitions into His hand, and willingly depend upon Him for what we ask*, in relation to the time and mode of bestowal. What is in faith committed to Him He will keep in safety; the plea that He presents cannot miscarry, nor will the prayers

\* Heb. iv. 16; x. 19, 20.

† Eph. iii 12

taken into His censer be returned unanswered. His infinite wisdom knows best the time and way of answering prayer; and His unchangeable love to His people is a sufficient guarantee that He will always regard their prayers, and never withhold from them any good thing. Here we may rest with all quietness of spirit and in full assurance of hope. We have placed our case in the hand of an Advocate who is skilful and able effectually to manage it; and we should be willing to leave it wholly with Him, knowing that the honour of His name is concerned in supplying the wants of them that fear Him, and in doing for His saints "exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think." Coming to God through such a Saviour, we may know that we "have eternal life, and may believe in the name of the Son of God."

How excellent and glorious is the name in which prayer is to be presented to God! How unspeakably precious it must ever be to the saints! It comprehends all Divine fulness, and every human perfection and excellency. Whatever belongs to Him as the Mediator of the Covenant and the Saviour of sinners; His dignity, authority, and power as the living Redeemer; the endearing relations in which He stands to the redeemed; all the work that He is perpetually performing for their benefit, and the innumerable blessings which He has procured, and which He is continually bestowing on them, are included in His name. The eternal Father is ever well pleased with the person and work of His beloved Son. The Spirit's office is to glorify Christ, and to take "the things which are His"—the glory of His person, His offices, and finished work, and the riches of His kingdom, and show them to the saved.



Angels behold, and with wrapt adoration worship, the Son. The "whole family in heaven and earth is named" after Him. The church of the first-born call upon His name; and while they remember it alone, through it they work, praise, fight, and triumph. To His saints His name is ever "ointment poured forth;"\* and, attracted and refreshed by "the fragrance of His good ointments, the virgins love Him." How strong and unfailing the ground of confidence, that prayer offered in this blessed name will be successful! By faith in it the suppliant takes hold upon Omnipotence; and however unworthy he is, the glory of the Redeemer is engaged to grant whatever He seeks, in accordance with God's will. The veracity of Him who is Truth itself is pledged to give whatever is asked in His name. He is deeply concerned at all times with the wants and trials of His people, and with the success of their supplications. No petition of the humble does He refuse or reject because of its weakness and unworthiness. His name would be dishonoured, as the great Object of trust and hope, if His advocacy failed, and the petitions put into His hand were unsuccessful. He "will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." "This shall be written for the generations to come, and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord." "We will rejoice in Thy salvation; and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions."†

\* Song i. 3. The *as* of the Authorized Version is not in the original.

† Ps. ciii. 17, 18; xx. 5.



## II.—WHO TEACHES TO PRAY?

Christ Jesus is the great teacher sent from God; and on His instructions we are absolutely and at all times dependent for the knowledge of all right guidance in life, and of all that concerns our future destinies. With reference to the great duty and privilege of prayer, which is the soul's converse with God, He is our efficient and sole teacher, without whose aid we never can engage aright in the exercise. The Sermon on the Mount—if not our Lord's first discourse spoken in His public ministry—was doubtless uttered towards its commencement. In it He assigned a prominent place to prayer, as a duty incumbent on all His followers. At a subsequent period of the Saviour's life on earth, when He was "praying in a certain place," one of His disciples, speaking doubtless in the name of the whole company, said unto Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples."\* They were evidently deeply impressed with the words which He had uttered, as well as with His manner in prayer; and, conscious of their great weakness and the imperfection of all that they had hitherto attempted in prayer, they sought from the Master special instruction on a subject so important, and submitted themselves unreservedly to His teaching. The Saviour readily answered their request, and spoke to them the great "Model Prayer," which He had formerly uttered, following it with directions in relation to the Spirit in which supplications are to be offered, and presenting motives and encouragements for the practice of the duty. This prayer is not "*the Lord's*"

\* Luke xi. 1.

in the sense of being offered as the expression of His personal wants, for we never find Him addressing God as "*our Father*," but as "*my Father*;" and He could not ask for the forgiveness of personal sins. It is rather "*the disciples' prayer*," expressing the suitable views and desires of true disciples in all their approaches to God.

The Saviour teaches to pray by numerous *express precepts*—by *instructions*, *promises*, and *examples*, throughout the inspired word. Before His incarnation, the Spirit of Christ, who inspired the penmen of the Old Testament, often enjoined prayer—described its spirit, spake of it as the appointed means of blessing, and recorded remarkable examples of prayer offered and answered. The whole of the Redeemer's life on earth was the most impressive teaching of prayer. In one of the Old Testament inspired songs, which is unquestionably prophetic of His earthly abasement, the Messiah says, "*I pray*," or "*I am prayer*,"\* implying not only that He Himself abounded in prayer, and that He influences us to perform the duty, but also that He is the source of all right prayer, and the only foundation of acceptance in prayer, and of gracious answers. In the brief account which the evangelists give of our Lord's childhood, it is plain that in meditation and prayer He occupied the first years of His life on earth. He recognised the obligation to be about His "*Father's business*." At His dedication to His public work by baptism, "*praying, the heavens were opened*," and the Spirit descended upon Him. On all the solemn incidents of His life on earth the

\* Psalm cix. 4. So the expression is in the original, as it is given in the margin.

Saviour is found engaged in prayer. Before choosing and sending out His apostles; in working miracles of power; on the mount of transfiguration; seeking for the apostles that their faith would not fail in the hour of temptation; at the close of the sacramental feast; and in His agony in Gethsemane and on the cross, He sought and realised the nearest communion with the Father in all that He did and suffered. At times He "rose a great while before day," and retired to a mountain to pray. Whole nights were spent alone in prayer. Again, He withdrew with His disciples unto a desert place to engage in social prayer. All the emotions and graces that are called into exercise in fervent prayer—reverence, trust, spiritual desire, dependence, and joyful hope, ever characterised the Saviour's spirit. He constantly manifested earnest importunity and full anticipation of a favourable answer. Thus, "the mind that was in Christ" was prayer, as was all His life; and His death was the priestly act of presenting His whole humanity as a sacrifice for sin, with resignation to God, and "strong crying and tears" for deliverance and acceptance. If we are in vital union with Christ, His mind will be in us. We will think, speak, and act as He did. In all things He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. His most impressive teaching, during His whole earthly life, was the spirit and expression of prayer to which He gave utterance. Would we be His disciples indeed, then it should be our main desire to cherish the same spirit, and to walk as He walked.

Our Lord teaches to pray by *the continual lessons of His word*. As He Himself, the personal word, reveals the Father, so in the inspired word He makes

Jesus teaches His people to pray. He is promised as the substitute of the ascended Redeemer. He is poured out as "*the spirit of grace and supplication.*" He abides with believers, as the indwelling Advocate and Comforter, to reveal Christ to their souls, to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He has said unto them.\* He makes continual intercession with them, and thus helps their infirmity in prayer. The Spirit is a constant, effectual teacher. Babes in Christ are taught, in "the spirit of adoption," to "cry, Abba, Father." Holy graces are drawn forth into lively exercise; the mouth is filled with arguments, and those who pray in the Spirit are fitted for the reception of the blessings sought. They have power with God and prevail. This help of the Spirit we should earnestly seek, as eminently that which is given by the Saviour when He teaches His disciples to pray. Soon as the promised powerful effusion of the Spirit shall come, multitudes will become prayerful; and the blessings sought will be largely and extensively enjoyed.

The Saviour's teaching to pray shows *praying and working inseparably united*. His own life on earth was one of entire devotedness to the Father's business. He "went about doing good." In the spirit of ceaseless activity, He declared, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And when He was about to complete His Surety-undertaking, He said, I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished!" "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." Christ on earth

\* John xiv. 26.

wrought always, till His baptism of blood, His work on Calvary, was finished, and He prayed always. If we are united to Him, we must be conformed to Him; we must be as He was in the world. Our duty and privilege are to *live*, as well as *pray* in Christ's name—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him."\* When we are united to Christ by His Spirit, He prays in us, while He intercedes for us in heaven. Our union with Him is at once the soul of prayer, and the Spirit of all holy activity. One with Christ, we live as He lived. Abiding in Him, we continue in His love, as He kept His Father's commandments, and abided in His love, (John xv. 16). Praying in Christ's name—earnest, importunate, persevering supplication in the way described, is absolutely essential to life in His name. The great *element* of all holy acceptable *work* is prayer. A life of devoted obedience, it has been justly remarked, is "connected with meditation, self-examination, self-conquest, and the most concentrated energy of the will." All this is involved in true prayer. Thus, the motto of every devoted servant of God is, "*praying and working*;" and in the one case and the other, to "pray without ceasing," and to work, so as "not to weary in well-doing," we must do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to the Father through Him.

\* Col. iii. 17.



## CHAPTER IV.

### MATTER AND QUALITIES OF PRAYER.

THE express declarations of the Saviour when He was on earth, in teaching and encouraging to prayer, as well as numerous other statements of the word, show that believers have the warrant to embrace a large extent of matter in their prayers to God. The expressions on this subject are put in the most general form, and are most comprehensive—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."\* These precious declarations, while they evince the amazing condescension and rich grace of the Hearer of Prayer, afford the fullest scope for enlarged petition, and the highest encouragement to expect that our wants, of whatever kind, presented to God will be relieved. As needy and dependent creatures, we have many wants of all kinds when we come as suppliants to the throne of grace. Whatever these be, and notwithstanding the difficulties or seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of obtaining the supplies desired, we are welcome to come in Christ's name, and the fullest promises are given that our petitions shall be heard, and that

\* John xiv. 13, 14; Philippians iv. 6; John xv. 7. See also Mark xi. 24; John xvi. 23; 1 Kings viii. 38, 39.

what we ask shall be granted. The field of prayer is the largest, the assurance is the strongest and fullest, that all needed supplies shall be graciously granted. The limitations of the grant are such as arise from the character of the Object of prayer, the state of the suppliant, and the expressed terms of the promise. Only for what is agreeable to God's will are we to pray, and hence we are prohibited from asking aught that is unlawful or sinful. We may not pray for what would gratify the lusts of the heart, or promote evil in ourselves or others. Whatever is *unsuitable* or *unseasonable* either to our outward state or our spiritual condition, is excluded from the matter of our prayers, and is not embraced in the answer promised. But notwithstanding these limitations, the matters which we are encouraged to seek and expect in prayer are so numerous and necessary as to meet all our lawful desires, and all our wants, whether of body or mind, or for time or eternity. We may ask "great and mighty things," \* even such as "we know not," and such as may appear to us unlikely or impossible to be obtained. In the Scriptures we have instances recorded not a few of such petitions answered. Things apparently little or unimportant may be properly matter of supplication to God. The resolution of *Dr. Payson*—"I will not dishonour my God by asking little things," was certainly rash and unwarranted. Nothing that concerns any of the redeemed is little in His sight, who numbers the hairs of their head, and appoints all their goings. The greatest events and issues often hinge upon matters apparently trivial and unimportant. However manifold our requests,

\* Jer. xxxiii. 3.

and however frequently presented, we are assured that they will not on this ground be refused. The Hearer of Prayer is never troubled by His people's frequent coming. His "own elect" He "avenges," when they "cry day and night" to Him. And when they plead frequently for others, He hears and answers, as well as when they present their own cases before the throne. "Whatsoever" embraces the concerns of the whole church, and of men of all classes and characters.

But, more particularly, as to the *matter* of believers' prayers, they are warranted to pray for, with the hope of receiving—

1. Whatever is *provided through God's rich grace in the covenant of peace*. The covenant from eternity was made the storehouse of all blessing to the redeemed. All that pertains to their state and condition, in soul and body, and for time and eternity, was embraced in it. All its stores are put into the hands of the Mediator to dispense to the heirs of salvation; and nothing that concerns them, the most minute as well as the greatest, is left out of the gracious arrangement. When we come in Christ's name, and take hold of the covenant, we ask and may hope to receive all new covenant blessings. The "Lord God is a sun and shield. He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly."\* "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, their offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on mine altar."†

2. All that the Redeemer has *purchased and promised*

\* Psu. lxxxiv. 8.

† Isa. lvi. 7.

may be matter of prayer. Those include the persons who are to be rescued from the curse, with all the blessings that they need for this life, and for that which is to come. The Saviour shed His blood to save from wrath all that were given Him of the Father, and to “purchase to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” \* and for them, at a price of infinite value, He procured all saving benefits. Believing prayer is the ordained way in which the redemption provided takes effect, and all its benefits are enjoyed. We should therefore pray that those for whom Christ died may be “gathered into one in Him.” † We are commanded to make “supplication for all saints;” ‡ whatever they need to deliver them from evil, and for support, comfort, and blessing in every condition, should be matter of our frequent and earnest petitions. Thus do we honour the Saviour by seeking to carry into effect the purchase of His blood; we do the greatest good to fellowmen, and are ourselves blessed, in becoming the means of blessing to others. The *promises* of the word supply abundant matter of believing prayer. As the expression of God’s gracious purposes, they are “exceeding great and precious,” and are “all yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” We have the warrant and welcome to make use of Divine promises in prayer, and to plead for the things promised. God is faithful who has promised, and He is glorified in fulfilling His promises. Those promises which respect *spiritual blessings* are absolute and unconditional, and we may plead them without mentioning any condition on our part, or submission to God’s will, and take no denial. Those which relate to *temporal*

\* Titus ii. 14.

† Ephes. i. 10.

‡ Ephes. vi. 18.

*blessings* we should ask God to fulfil, according to His good pleasure, and should be submissive, whether He grants or refuses.

3. We have the warrant to ask *what is for God's glory, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth.* When our Lord teaches us to pray, He instructs us to place first in order of all our petitions that which supplicates that the Divine name may be hallowed or sanctified, and those which seek that the kingdom of God may come, and His will be done on earth, as by saints and angels in heaven. These are the great ends of God's work in creation, providence, and redemption, so they should ever be ours in prayer. We should earnestly, and first of all, seek that God may be glorified in us and by us, and that, in answering our requests, He should give or withhold, as may contribute to the advancement of His own glory. The coming and establishment of Christ's kingdom, being the grand and chief manifestation of God's glory in the earth, should occupy a chief place in all our prayers. When it is sought aright, there will be offered frequent petitions on many subjects, the most important and weighty; as for the destruction of Satan's kingdom, the spread and power of scriptural truth, the consecration of money and personal effort for this purpose, the work of grace in the soul, the purification of the church, the ingathering of Jew and Gentile, the conversion of the nations, and the directing and overruling of all events and changes in the world for accomplishing these ends. Earnest petitions offered for these high objects will lead to devoted effort for their attainment. Believing suppliants have their moral nature elevated by becoming co-workers with God, and partakers with Christ in the glory to be revealed. Thus they realise



the answer to the Saviour's intercessory prayer, and the glory which the Father has given Him is imparted to them. \* The doing of God's will on earth expresses the whole duty and privilege of man, and is inseparably connected with the perfection of His nature and all His happiness.

4. Prayer is to be made for the *possession and increase of holiness, in knowing, obeying, and submitting to God's will in all things.* By reiterated and most weighty commands, we are enjoined to "follow after holiness," to forsake all sin, and to be "holy in all manner of conversation," and to "be holy, for God is holy." While this is our constant duty, and we are required to be *active in sanctification*, the source of all holiness in us is God in covenant, as the efficient Agent is the Holy Spirit. Hence there is indispensable need of constant fervent prayer for the possession and advancement of holiness. We should pray for the indwelling and work of the Spirit, for the mortification of sin, the sanctifying power of the truth, the sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the heart and conscience, and the transformation of nature and life after the image of God. To know, obey, and submit to God's will in all things, is to advance in the Divine life, and secures the increase and perfection of holiness. This expresses the whole duty and privilege of man, and is inseparably connected with the perfection of His nature, and all His happiness. How constantly should we seek that God's will in all things may be done *in us and by us!* How worthy this to be the matter and burden of all our prayers; in the granting of such petitions will be found our highest honour and

\* John xvii. 22.

greatest felicity. Prayers for the increase of holiness include petitions for pardon and acceptance, preservation from temptation, the sanctification to us of all providences, and the perfection of holiness in heaven—these supply frequent and manifold errands to the throne of grace.

5. We have the warrant to pray for *all necessary temporal good things*. These were provided for the saints in the covenant of grace; as freed from the curse upon the creatures, they were purchased by the atonement of the Saviour, and they are the matter of many gracious promises. Our Father in heaven knows that we have need of these things before we ask them; but we honour Him by coming to Him as children to a father, with every bodily want, and in all our earthly cares and necessities. When we seek worldly things in submission to His will, and a portion of them that thereby we may advance His glory, He bestows them in answer to prayer, as “the lot of our inheritance” which He chooses. If He withhold temporal gifts, and allots to His people privation and affliction, He does this for the discipline of love, that they may be weaned from the world, be made partakers of His holiness, and that they may enjoy more fully that better part which cannot be taken away.

6. Besides prayer for God’s glory and our own good, *we are commanded and encouraged to pray for others*. As consecrated priests, ministering at God’s altar, we should pray much for the church. We should make supplication for men of all classes and characters; for those who are in public authority, for rich and poor, for the outcast and wandering, for the afflicted and dying, and for “all saints,” in their diversified conditions and circumstances. We are

*debtors* to all men, to pray for them, even when we cannot have personal intercourse with them. Our prayers for others should be for associated communities, families, and nations, as well as for individuals. God's people, when in affliction and captivity, are commanded to pray for "the peace of the city" of their sojourning, assured that in its peace they shall enjoy peace. Thus guilty cities and nations are spared for the sake of the righteous praying ones that dwell in them. Thus these prove to be "the salt of the earth"—arresting the progress of corruption, and the leaves of their profession are for "the healing of the nations."

## II.—QUALITIES OF PRAYER.

Prayer being "the soul's converse with God," and the expression of all right doctrinal thought and feeling, it is evidently of prime importance to consider the *manner* as well as the matter of prayer. There are certain *qualities* which must characterise our approaches to the mercy-seat, if our petitions are accepted and successful. These appear from the character of the exalted Object of worship, and the condition of the suppliant; and they are clearly indicated by the numerous commands of the word enjoining the duty, and by the approved examples of servants of God, whose prayerful spirit and the effects of their importunate pleading are recorded in the Bible. On a subject so comprehensive as the qualities of accepted prayer, only a few particulars can be noticed. These, however, may be regarded as primary and fundamental qualities, and as associated with others that are found more or less in prayers uttered from the emotions of the renewed

heart, and followed by the bestowal of blessings desired.

First of all, all true prayer is *spiritual*, and is to be presented from a *spiritual frame of heart and life*. To the woman of Samaria the Saviour declared—“*God is Spirit,\* and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for the Lord seeketh such to worship Him.*” † His essential nature is pure spirit—not confined to space or a material body, but invisible, and everywhere present; and in worshipping Him we are required to realise His nature and presence as such, and to worship Him in a way becoming His Divine nature—not with a bodily service, but with the full engagement of our spirits. He is essentially *Truth*, and requires not patience, or pomp, or formality, but truth in principle, and manner and end, in all acts of religious worship. Believers are built up “a spiritual house,” and are required to offer to God “spiritual sacrifices.” ‡ We are to “pray in the Spirit;” § and saints are represented as “praying in the Holy Ghost.” || All true prayer is the fruit of His indwelling and power. In a spiritual frame of mind we only can come before God. The prayer that is “effectual” must be *inwrought* by the Spirit. ¶ The soul should be active and the desires spiritual in prayer. Our chief and most earnest petitions should be about spiritual things; and when we ask for temporal things, we should do this in a spiritual frame, and for spiritual ends and objects. Thus the whole exercise of prayer,

\* The best MS. give the first clause without the article.

† John iv. 23, 24.

‡ 1 Peter ii. 5.      § Eph. vi. 18.      || Jude 20.

¶ James v. 16. Such is the form of the original epithet.



when conducted aright, is fitted to engage all the powers of our hearts and spirits, to render us more spiritual, and to bring us to enjoy "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

*Secondly.* The *deepest humility* is required in all prayer to God. The queen of all Christian graces is humility. Its spirit and manifestation are indispensably required in prayer, as being alone suitable to the duty. The want of an humble spirit renders multitudes wholly prayerless, as pride of heart in any measure renders formal prayers useless. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all His thoughts." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." "The desire of the humble the Lord heareth." \* "The Lord hath respect to the lowly, but the proud He knoweth afar off." † Humility of spirit is eminently befitting in those who are sinful dust and ashes, when approaching God, who is infinitely great and glorious in holiness. This spirit is manifested in a deep sense of utter unworthiness, in sorrow and contrition of heart for sin, in confessing and aggravating our vileness in God's sight, in bearing all rebukes and discouragements in prayer, and yet waiting patiently at the mercy-seat, in thankfulness for the best blessing, and in the spirit of self-abasement, deepened by the acceptance of prayer, and the reception of gracious answers. The main characteristics of prayers indited by the Spirit, as recorded in the word—of saints whose supplications have prevailed with God, as Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Ezra, Paul—are self-abasement, contrition of heart, and penitential confession. While these were

\* PSA. x. 4.

† JAS. iv. 6; PSA. x. 7; PSA. cxxxviii. 6.



dictated by the Spirit of grace and supplication, we are forbidden to despond on account of the imperfection of our humility, or because of the sense of remaining pride of heart. Looking to Him whom we have pierced, we mourn after a godly sort. The work of grace which He begins He will carry forward and perfect. The blood of atonement cleanses from the sins of our holy things; and, through the advocacy of our great High Priest, we are brought to self-abasement, and at the same time to a state of spiritual exaltation.

*Thirdly. Dependence and submission* are main qualities of true prayer. The spirit and attitude of prayer express entire dependence on God for everything that we need, and for all that we supplicate Him to bestow. From Him we have life, and breath, and all things; "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." A right state of heart is to feel always our absolute dependence upon God, and prayer is the due expression of it. We unspeakably need pardon of sin, and we ask it in prayer, as none can forgive sins but God. We seek light to guide our paths, and as it is not in man to direct his steps, we look to God to lead us in a right way. Our strength for duty and trial is not in ourselves or any creature; and therefore in prayer we betake ourselves to the Rock of ages, and take hold on almighty strength. This state of dependence is constant and unchangeable, and has respect to mind and body, to all our relations, to things temporal and spiritual, to life and death, and to all blessings to be desired or enjoyed. To cherish a right sense of dependence prompts to prayer, as the due expression of it is our essential quality of acceptable prayer. Dependence on God involves entire submission to His will, and this we

should manifest in all our approaches to God. The language of all right prayer is that of our great High Priest, when in His soul-agony He “prayed the more earnestly”—“Not my will, but Thine be done.” Submission to God’s will is required in reference to the *matters* we ask, the *measure* of the favour sought, and the *season of granting* our petitions. We often know not what spirit we are of, nor what is best for us. Nothing can we demand on the ground of justice, as we only deserve wrath. Our whole plea must be on the ground of mercy and grace, which is sovereign. We are ever prone to ask amiss, for corrupt and improper ends. God, to whom we pray, does all things “according to the counsel of His own will;” and therefore it concerns us, in coming to the throne of grace, to supplicate Him always, in the exercise of patience and prostrate submission.

*Fourthly.* Prayer must be presented *in a holy manner, and from pure motives.* God is “glorious in holiness,” and is to be worshipped “in the beauty of holiness.” It is the settled law of His kingdom, that “the pure in heart” only “shall see God.” “He who shall ascend the hill of God, and shall stand in His holy place, must have clean hands and a pure heart.”\* The convinced sinner is taught to say in confession—“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”† God’s will is, that “men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without fear and doubting.”‡ In coming to God in any act of worship, we need to form and carry out the resolution—“I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.”§ To pray in a holy

\* Psal. xxiv. 3, 4.

† Psal. lxvi. 18.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

§ Psalm xxvi. 6.

manner, requires watchfulness, freedom from all worldly distractions and cares, and gospel sincerity. We require to come by faith to the blood of atonement for pardon and purification, and to seek the Spirit to "cleanse us from all filthiness of the heart and spirit," that "we may perfect holiness in the fear of God." Purity of motive in prayer evidences that we worship God in a holy manner. The grand constraining motive of worship, as of every right action, is to "do all to the glory of God." The record throughout the Scriptures of countless instances of accepted prayer, shows that the chief motive of the suppliants in presenting these petitions was the Divine glory. Their appeal was ever to the honour and faithfulness of God. Thus did Moses plead for Israel—"Wherefore should the Egyptians speak." "Now, I beseech Thee, let the power of the Lord be great according as Thou hast spoken." This appeal was followed by the immediate assurance that his prayer was heard—"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."\* Elijah, from this motive, sought the decision from God at Carmel—"Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."† Throughout the Psalms—the church's inspired censer of praise—the glory of Jehovah is the frequent motive and argument in prayer—"For Thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name, and deliver us, and purge away our sin, for Thy name's sake." "Quicken me, O Lord, for Thy name's sake; for Thy righteousness

\* Numbers xiv. 17-21.

† 1 Kings xviii. 37.

sake, bring my soul out of trouble." Thus, too, Daniel prayed, when he fasted and made supplication for Israel's deliverance, and for the house of his God—"Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." This motive appears prominent in all the Saviour's prayers for Himself and for His people, during His state of earthly abasement, as in His work of servile obedience, in the crisis of His sufferings, and in the glorious display of His miracles of power. His constant grand aim was the Father's glory. His great plea, as it was His act of heartfelt submission, was—"Not my will, but Thine be done." At the grave of Lazarus He prayed—"Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me."\* Purity of motive, supreme regard to God's honour and glory, is the main characteristic of all filial prayer and of true devotedness; it is therefore an essential element of prayer. It forms a fit test of our sincerity in prayer, as the want of it accounts for the fact of so many prayers remaining unanswered. The "cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things," choke the spirit of prayer, equally with the seed of the word, and in many cases suspend wholly its performance. Selfishness engenders insincerity, and God is mocked in our petitions. The quaint but truthful remark of one deserves serious consideration—"People never tell more lies than in their prayers."†

*Fifthly. Earnestness and importunity* are essential elements of prayer. The matters sought in prayer

\* John xi. 42.

† Robert Adam.



are so important, and the state of heart required in approaching God is so solemn and absorbed, as to demand the utmost seriousness and fervency. The heart of the suppliant must be fixed and earnest if he would move the heart of Omnipotence. In His last sufferings, the Redeemer, "with strong crying and tears," made His supplications to the Father—" *Being in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly.*" In a like frame of spirit must we follow our blessed Example, if our prayer will prevail with the Eternal. As Jacob, when *we wrestle* with the Angel of the Covenant, putting forth all energy and concentrated efforts, we must cherish the resolute purpose—"We will not let Thee go till Thou bless us."\* The resolution of a Christian Father† should be ours in engaging in prayer—"Never will I come away from Thee, without Thee." This earnestness in prayer is opposed to want of due preparation and spirituality of mind. It restrains and prevents wandering thoughts, and it is that ardour of devout affections and desires which the Holy Spirit enkindles. *Importunity* in petitioning, which is the expression of earnestness, has been not improperly said to be "*the essence of prayer.*"‡ We ask for blessings, unwilling to take a denial; we wrestle in pleading till we prevail. *Augustine* makes mention of one so praying, "as if he would breathe out his life in prayer." *Justus Jones* relates of *Luther's*

\* Gen. xxxii. 26.

† Bernard.

‡ Of this importunity in prayer we have a striking instance in the prayer of Knox, the Scottish Reformer, when He was accustomed, in pleading for Christ's cause, to say—"Lord, give me Scotland, else I die." It need not be wondered at that Queen Mary should say she "dreaded one of John Knox's prayers more than ten thousand men!"



habits of prayer—"No day passes in which he does not devote at least three hours to prayer and meditation. I once succeeded in hearing him pray. What energy, what faith in his words! He prays earnestly, as a man conversing with God, and with such trust and faith as a man conversing with his father." Thus should we, as David—"Cry to God with the whole heart."\* So, even in prayers for others, should we "*labour fervently in prayer*" for them—be in "a conflict" and agony.† In this spirit of holy importunity men should "pray always, and not faint." Our encouragement and hope of success in prayer are inseparably connected with it—"Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily."‡

*Lastly.* *Constancy* and *perseverance* are indispensable qualities of true prayer. There is no quality of prayer more frequently insisted on and exemplified in the Scriptures than constant continuance in the duty. "Continue instant in prayer," "Praying always," "Praying without ceasing," are the reiterated injunctions of the word. Thus have all devoted servants of Christ regarded the spirit of prayer as the element of their new life, and its continual exercise as their sole duty and darling employment. The apostle Paul speaks of his praying for the churches always, and of labouring for them earnestly night and day in his prayers. As the spirit of prayer is that of dependence, humility, love, and faith conjoined, it has been properly remarked that "he who does not pray always, never prays." "The whole

\* Ps. cxix. 143.

† Col. iv. 12.

‡ Luke xviii. 7, 8.

church life," says an early Christian Father, "is one great continued prayer." \* *Lamartine*, speaking of the Puritans of England, declares "their life was a prayer, and their death was a psalm." Constancy in prayer is shown in the habit of ejaculatory petition; in presenting to God short, sudden, reverent addresses, amid daily business, in sudden emergencies, and in offering up the rising emotions and desires of the heart at all times and in all events and circumstances. Thus the primitive Christians were accustomed to "pray without ceasing." *Clement of Alexandria* describes a Christian by saying—"In every place he will pray, though not openly to be seen of men; even when he is walking for pleasure, even when he is in converse with other men, in stillness, in reading, and when he is engaged in reasonable business, he prays by all means. And even, also, if he only think on God in the chamber of the soul, and with silent sighing calls upon the Father, He will be near Him and with Him, for He is still speaking to Him." The excellent *Jonathan Edwards* relates of his experience in the early period of his life—"I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent." When the pious *Franke* was asked by a friend how he maintained a constant peace of mind, he replied—"By stirring up my mind a hundred times a day. Wherever I am, whatever I do, I say, Blessed Jesus, have I truly a share in Thy redemption? Are my sins forgiven? Am I guided by Thy Spirit? Thine I am; wash me again and again. By this constant converse with Jesus I have

\* Origen.

enjoyed serenity of mind, and a settled peace in my soul." The cultivation of this habit of ejaculatory prayer, instead of preventing attendance upon stated seasons of duty, or of more protracted devotion, will rather prove an incitement to them, and will render them the more profitable when they occur. Perseverance in prayer is opposed to all fickleness and unsteadiness; is continued supplication for some particular blessing. It is the perfection of fervency and constancy. When Christians are represented in Scripture as "*continuing instant in prayer*," the original Greek word expresses the proper idea of perseverance. It is a military term, denoting holding out with invincible fortitude in a post of difficulty and danger; resisting hostile attacks until the object desired is attained. Such perseverance we should manifest in pleading under delays and apparent refusals. In such cases, God tries the spirit of His servants, and the value which they set on the objects sought in prayer. And at times, when He withholds the blessing sought, He designs to confer a good more important than that which the petitioner directly desired. Moses, when he pleaded for Israel, on account of their sin in the matter of the golden calf, filled his mouth with arguments, and prevailed in prayer, till God appeared to bend from His purpose, and gave the repeated assurance of His gracious presence. The Syrophenician woman persevered in prayer, amidst delays and discouragements, till she received the blessing sought, and obtained besides the Saviour's commendation of the greatness of her faith. With such precepts for our direction in prayer, and such examples for our encouragement, we should learn to pray with constancy and fervent importunity; and in difficulty, distraction, and felt

weakness, we should persevere to the end, assured that in continuing to seek we shall find, and that in repeated knocking, the door of access and blessing will be opened.

These qualities of prayer to God appear in more marked prominence when we approach Him, as we are encouraged to do, as our Father in Christ. In this character He is presented as full of tender pity and compassion, having yearning bowels of mercies, ever ready to receive sinners, and to bestow upon them pardon and salvation. We should therefore approach to Him in prayer as children to a Father, who is able and ready to help. We should have faith in His paternal nature and character, and in His gracious promises, and in His paternal dealings towards those who betake themselves to His mercy. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy." Believing in His gracious nature and paternal compassion, we acknowledge His past goodness. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." We rely upon Him for all present and future blessing. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."\* While we come before God with childlike confidence and humility, because He is our Father in heaven, infinitely holy and glorious, and we are guilty and polluted, we should draw nigh in humility and self-abasement. As the returning prodigal, we should arise and go to our Father, confessing that we have sinned against heaven and in His sight, and are unworthy to be called His children. With holy boldness and freedom of utterance we are encouraged

\* Psalm ciii. 8, 10, 13.



to make our requests known to God.\* This boldness should be cherished in opposition to all sinful despondency, slavish fear, and groundless suspicions and jealousies of God, as if He was not gracious and “merciful,” as He is declared to be, and not ready to welcome and save sinners. Coming to God as our Father in Christ, we should draw near with importunity, with love and delight in Him, in filial submission, and with assured and joyful hope of acceptance. A little child, by its importunity, will bend an earthly parent from his purpose, and obtain its desire. So believing suppliants, pleading their covenant-relation, expostulate with their heavenly Father, and prevail in prayer. “Doubtless Thou art our Father,” &c. † Filial love and trust is the true spirit of prayer, as delight in God is the certain precursor of a gracious answer. “I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength;” and then in consequence—“I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.” ‡ “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give Thee the desires of thine heart.” § As a dutiful child confides in its father’s wisdom for direction, and submits to his disposal for correction and support, so in prayer the children of God submit to their Father in all things, as to the time and

\* The manner of gospel-worship is often characterised in the word by the term “boldness.” Hebrews x. 19—“Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;” Hebrews iv. 16—“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.” The original Greek word denotes all *freedom of utterance*, and is singularly applicable to the free intercourse of children with the Father whom they love, and in whom they repose heartfelt confidence.

† Isaiah lxiii. 16.

‡ Psalm xviii. 1, 3.

§ Psalm xxxvii. 4.



manner of answering, the measure of the goodness and mercy they seek, and the trials they are called to endure. A proper view of the paternal relation, and the due exercise of a filial spirit, inspire the joyful hope of acceptance and abundant blessing. If earthly parents, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall the heavenly Father "give good things to them that ask Him!"\* The breathing of the "spirit of adoption," which is the true language of prayer, is the importunate cry, "Abba, Father." This is its interpretative utterance, even though audible words may not be employed. As children pleading with earthly parents expect to prevail with them by appealing to their paternal affections, so, under a sense of need, believers have access with freedom to God the Father. The whole expression of the renewed heart finds its appropriate utterance in the cry, "Abba, Father." The eloquence, power, and prevalence of prayer are love. It is the pleading of a child, sensible of its own weakness, and that all dependence and confidence should ever rest on the Father's wisdom, love, and power. It is at the same time the strongest wrestling of one who has power with God, and prevails. Well might *Luther* declare of this utterance of the spirit of adoption—"Though it is a faint cry, yet it doth pierce the clouds, so that there is nothing else heard in heaven of God and His angels." And again—"The little word Father, conceived effectually in the heart, passes all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. The matter is not expressed with words,

\* Matt. vii. 9.

but groanings, which groanings cannot be uttered with any words of eloquence, for no language can express them." \*

\* Luther on the Galatians, chapter iv.; v. 6.

## CHAPTER V.

### DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER.

As prayer is the great duty and privilege of the Christian life, it is to be observed in various relations, and at different seasons; and it presents diversified aspects, arising from the conditions and circumstances in which the exercise is engaged in. The obligation to the performance of the duty in all these, as enjoined in the Divine word, is manifold and weighty. Prayer may be regarded as 1, Private; 2, Domestic; 3, Social; 4, Public; and 5, In respect to *seasons*—under *trials* and *bereavements*. Each of these demands particular consideration.

#### I.—PRIVATE PRAYER.

This is the soul's individual converse with God, when the person, secluded from all others, pours out his heart in adoration, petition, and thanksgiving. Such prayer our Lord specially enjoins when He directs—"Thou, when thou prayest, enter thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."\* A place of secrecy for communion with God is regarded as important, and every person is supposed to have one. It is "*thy closet*," that which one selects for himself, which he loves, and to which he returns with desire to be alone with the all-seeing God. This is not necessarily always in the same place; but to one who

\* Matthew vi. 6.

loves the duty there can never be wanting a closet retreat, and the "*still hour*" of access to the mercy seat.

We ever need, as we should always value, recourse to secret prayer. It has been properly said to be "*the test of all prayer.*" In this ordinance we are called to withdraw from the world, with its ensnaring and distracting scenes, and to set our faces and hearts heavenward. We commune with our hearts, and learn to judge ourselves, and to form a right estimate of our character, condition, and principles. Above all, in private prayer we are led to near fellowship with God. In secret, we may best ascertain whether we have the true spirit of prayer. When praying in company, we are in danger of deceiving ourselves, by displaying before others our gifts, while grace in the heart is wanting; only speaking to human ears, rather than to the Hearer of Prayer. When retired and alone, before the throne of grace, we are freed from such a temptation. Our true state and character are best known in retirement. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." \* We may then ascertain whether we feel in our hearts to offer prayer to God, or whether we present to Him only "the sacrifice of the lips," while the heart is far from Him. Our chief concern in entering our closet should be to realise the Divine presence. We go alone to pour out our hearts before God; and we should feel that it is surely good for us to "draw near" to Him. His invitation and promise are—"Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee." † The freedom

\* Hebrews iv. 13.

† Job xxii. 21.

and particularity of address which characterise private prayer are an eminent means of cultivating a loving and familiar acquaintance with God, and thus of enjoying the benefits which result from it. Private, retired prayer may be, as it frequently is, *silent*—consisting in the movement of the internal thoughts and desires of the heart. Such was the ejaculatory prayer of Moses at the margin of the Red Sea; the petitions of Abraham's servant as he stood at the well; and of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as she wept and spoke in her heart—"Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." But it may sometimes be of advantage in private prayer to use low audible words, as tending to prevent wandering thoughts, to fix the attention, and to give the more definite meaning and emphasis to our petitions. *Luther* frequently prayed in private, standing looking out at a window, and gave expression to his thoughts and desires in low articulate words. The benefit derived from private prayer will be found greatly in connection with the *regularity* of its observance. As our bodies are refreshed and invigorated by stated supplies of daily food, so spiritual health and growth are maintained and promoted by regular and frequent communion with God. We should settle and constantly keep the appointment to be alone with God; and we should guard against and break away from whatever would prevent it. The morning and evening of each day are befitting seasons for secret devotion. Our first waking moments should be given to converse with Him, who watched over us when helpless in sleep, and who renews our life each returning day. And as the night enters, we need to seek in prayer pardon for the sins of the past day; and, in resigning our souls into His hands, to ask



protection from evils and dangers unseen. If we desire and value communion with God, we will seek and find other times for private prayer almost daily. The Jews had their stated hours daily in which they went up to the temple to pray; and these, too, the primitive Christians observed with regularity. David speaks in one of the Psalms of praying and crying aloud, "evening, morning, and at noon," and again, of praising God "seven times a day." \* And Daniel, when in high office, and engrossed in public affairs, went into his chamber, and with the windows toward Jerusalem, prayed kneeling before God. † In like manner, if we are truly prayerful, we shall redeem time, and snatch ourselves from worldly pursuits to enter into our closet, to seek direction and renewed strength and blessing from the hearer of prayer. The most devoted servants of God, amid incessant labours and manifold trials, have felt the indispensable need of such retirement and holy separation, and have given themselves to securing it. It is recorded of *John Welsh* of Ayr, one of our Presbyterian suffering confessors, that when at home, he spent one third of every day in private prayer; and that he frequently rose from bed in the night to engage in this duty. ‡ *Luther*, in the period of

\* Psalm lv. 17; cxix. 164.

† Dan. vi. 10.

‡ In the "Scots' WORTHIES" it is related of Welsh—"He used to say he wondered how a Christian could lie in bed all night and not rise to pray; many times he rose, and many times he watched. One night he rose and went into the next room, where he stayed so long at secret prayer, that his wife, fearing he might catch cold, was constrained to rise and follow him, and, as she hearkened she heard him speak in interrupted expressions—'Lord, wilt Thou not grant me Scotland?' and after a pause—'Enough, Lord, enough.' She

his most active labours and conflicts, spent *three* of his best hours daily in prayer. When he was called at any time to accumulated and more arduous work, he was accustomed to say to his companions in labour—" *Now, we must pray more.*" The advice of the excellent *Philip Henry* to his children and friends was—" Be sure you look to your secret duty; keep that up whatever you do. The soul cannot prosper in the neglect of it." Remarking that apostacy generally begins at the closet, he would say—" Secret prayer is first carelessly performed, then frequently overlooked, and after a while wholly cast off; and then, farewell God and Christ, and all religion." Let us lay to heart these warnings, counsels, and examples; and whatever be our relations, and toils, and trials, let us have recourse more frequently to our closets, to meet with God, to receive from Him renewed direction and strength, and to resign ourselves wholly to Him for all service and blessing.

## II.—FAMILY PRAYER.

The family is a revealed institution of heaven, among the first given to man on earth. In the state of primeval innocence in Paradise, God laid the foundation of the church, and of the state in the family constitution, by ordaining marriage; and He appointed the way of blessing to the individual both for soul and body, and to communities of every kind in the law of the Sabbath.

asked afterwards what he meant by the expression. He showed himself dissatisfied with her curiosity; but told her that he had been wrestling with the Lord for Scotland, and found there was a sad time at hand, but that the Lord would be gracious to a remnant."

God is Himself the Author and Source of the family constitution. "He maketh Him families like a flock." He takes to Himself the condescending and endearing title of "The God of all the families of Israel." \* The relation between domestic society and Him who instituted it, the purposes for which it was ordained, the duties enjoined upon the different parties which constitute the family, the blessings promised, and the judgments threatened, according as these duties are faithfully performed or neglected, and the examples of domestic life recorded in the word, all enforce the obligation and importance of family worship, and show that there are benefits most valuable and extensive which cannot be enjoyed but in the way of its diligent observance. It may be admitted that the Scriptures do not contain an express precept enjoining family worship, but this is no valid argument against its obligation. There are other institutions, such as females partaking in sealing ordinances, which though not in express terms commanded, are yet obligatory, from the nature and design of their institution, and from the general command to observe it. God appointed the *domestic constitution* as an eminent means for advancing His glory. By His all-seeing and wonder-working providence, He brings together and unites in the nearest and most sacred bond the heads of the family, and makes them absolutely dependent upon Him for direction and support in all family duties and trials, and for the whole comfort and blessing of the household. It is therefore plainly incumbent on them to acknowledge God, by direct acts of domestic worship, to place the household under His protec-

\* Ps. cvii. 41 ; Jer. xxxi. 1.

tion, and to seek His blessing continually on all the members, and in all domestic duties and changes and trials. Even the light of nature has taught the heathen in ancient and modern times to own the entire dependence of the family upon the Divine Being for preservation and blessing. The ancient Romans had their household gods to which they daily presented offerings, and on special occasions made vows. In *China*, and some other pagan lands, acts of reverential regard are shown to deceased ancestors, as the heads of families; and libations and gifts are presented to superior beings, who are believed to be able to avert calamities and to confer family benefits. Every view of the family constitution given in the Scriptures, of the duties enjoined on the parties, and of the benefits to be derived from their faithful performance, shows the obligation of family prayer, and inculcates the necessity and importance of its right and diligent performance. The head of the family is, by Divine appointment, constituted the king and priest of his house, and is, to a large extent, responsible for its spiritual interests. The home of the household is the domestic society, in which God is sought in prayer and praise, and where He has promised to come and dwell with His people. The "voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous," and Jehovah is ever to them "a wall of fire around them, and the glory in the midst." Husbands and wives, marrying in the Lord, are commanded to walk together as "heirs of the grace of life," and to dwell together, so that their "prayers be not hindered." The duties which parents owe to their children, in dedicating them to God, in travelling as in birth till Christ be formed in them, in



bringing them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and in training them in the way in which they should go; and the duties which the heads of families owe to other domestics, require the spirit of prayer for their due discharge—as the most impressive way of enforcing them is the daily assembling of the household at the family altar for united prayer, praise, and reading the word, with the influence of a consistent Christian example.

In the primitive ages of the world, under the patriarchal dispensation, revealed religion in its social character was chiefly confined to the family. The head was the spiritual instructor, officiating priest, and supreme ruler in the household. There was thus secured for the family an early and daily religious training; and the parental government was fitted to be a model for civil society. In due time the family was to expand into the tribe, and this again, in its extended enlargement, to become the nation, framed on the basis of true religion, and by national acts of worship and submission, publicly acknowledging dependence on Israel's God for support, protection, and every blessing. True religion was designed to be propagated, spread, and become universal through the family constitution. So God still deals with mankind. Races and nations retain and display the marked characteristics of their founders and of the families of which they consist. The family is the nursery of the church, as the church on earth is that of the church in heaven. In the inspired record of distinguished servants of God, from the earliest times, there are pointed references to family religion, with accounts of united worship and of other domestic duties. Thus, when before the flood, Enoch is said



to have “walked with God”<sup>\*</sup>—a scriptural expression for habitual daily fellowship; this is done in connection with family relations, and must have been in the way of regular family worship. Noah, too, who was “a just man, perfect in his generation, and walked with God,” is thus characterised as the head of a family. The faith that led him to take warning of things unseen, and the fear that moved him to prepare the ark, had respect to the salvation of his house.† Abraham, the father of the faithful—“the friend of God”—is commended not only for his personal faith in the promise, but primarily for the religious ordering of his household, and for acts of domestic instruction and worship. Thus, when he and his son Isaac journeyed to the mount of sacrifice, he announced to his servants that he and the lad would go to a distance to worship, implying that worship with his family was a stated observance. Afterwards, God commends him, chiefly as a parent and a godly master, when He says—“I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken of him.”‡

Family prayer, expressive of true faith and dependence, is a chief part of the way of the Lord, which Abraham and his children and household after him were to keep; and the instructions and commands which he imparted to them must have been prayerful. When, in his different sojournings, as he pitched his tent to dwell with his family, he built altars to God, and called upon the name of the Lord. This was for family worship and dedication, as well as

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Peter iii. 7

† Gen. v. 22.

‡ Gen. xviii. 19.

a public testimony to the inhabitants of the land in behalf of the supreme authority of Jehovah, his covenant God. In like manner, Isaac had primary regard to the worship of his family, when he built an altar to God; and Jacob took pains to prepare his whole family for solemn worship and renewed federal dedication. He enjoined his household to “put away the strange gods that were among them, to be clean and change their garments, and to arise and go up to Bethel, and build an altar to God.”\*

Under the law of Moses a special regard was had, in all its ordinances and institutions, to the domestic constitution; and the commands given required the diligent observance of family prayer, with discipline and instruction, in order to any proper obedience. Circumcision and the passover were family ordinances, which could not be solemnized without united prayer. The instruction which Israelitish priests were enjoined to impart; the feasts which the heads of families with their domestics were to keep before the Lord, in the place which He would choose for them; and the institution of the Sabbath; all these required for their right observance the cultivation of devotional habits by the father of the family; and only in the way of family prayer could these duties be properly performed, and the blessings desired obtained.

Approved servants of God in subsequent ages recognised the obligation of family worship, and exemplified it in their walk before God and their households. The venerable Joshua, as a motive to all Israel to decision and revered covenant-dedication to the service of God, declared—“As for me and

\* Gen. xxxv. 1, 2, 3.

my house, we will serve the Lord.”\* David, in a psalm, which has been fitly termed “THE FAMILY SONG,” designed for the perpetual use of the church, says—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Oh! when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”† At a time when much occupied with public affairs as the chief of the nation, it is recorded that after he had dismissed the whole congregation, he “returned to bless his house,” intimating that the worship of God in the family was not to be neglected through any public engagement, and that he had a principal regard to the spiritual benefit of the family, as the appropriate fruit of the joyful solemnities. So, under the New Testament, the observance of family worship, and a marked blessing upon the ordinance, characterise God’s approved servants. Zecharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”‡ Cornelius, the centurion, “feared God with all his house, and prayed always”—which included praying with his family as well as in private.§ And the “unfeigned faith” of the mother and grandmother of Timothy, which led to his instruction from childhood in the holy Scriptures, doubtless found expression in united domestic prayer, and brought forth its fruit in his early devoted piety and eminent usefulness.

The whole scheme of Divine revelation throughout assigns a prominent place of the most powerful influence to the family relation. In the Divine purpose,

\* Joshua xxiv. 15.      † Psalm ci. 2.      ‡ Luke i. 6.

§ Acts x. 2.

true religion was designed to be made known, propagated, and become universal through the family constitution. One of the most dangerous practical errors—of far-reaching evil consequences—is to overlook and ignore this connection, as is done by those who deny the doctrine of infant baptism, or representative responsibility and descending federal obligation; or the analogy between domestic and civil society; or the obligation of civil rulers to promote true religion, and to protect and cherish the church of Christ. God, in dealing with nations in the way of mercies and judgments, has ever had respect to the domestic constitution, and to the character and conduct of parents and the heads of households. Families are the germs of the nation. They impress on it their character, which is permanent and to a great degree unchangeable; and they entail on it a blessing or a curse, throughout long ages of national existence. So, too, families are the nurseries of the church on earth, as it is the training institution for the church triumphant in heaven.

Family prayer should be accompanied with the *devout reading of the word*, and by the *singing of praise*. “Everything,” including all the relations, engagements, comforts, and trials of the family, is sanctified by the word and by prayer. The “voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous.”\* “It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High; to show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.”† The primitive Christians in early times set a high value on domestic praise; and whether in their own dwellings,

\* Psalm cxviii. 15.

† Psalm xcii. 1, 2.



or in prisons, the melody of sweet psalms mingled with their domestic worship, cheered their own hearts, and, like fragrant incense, attracted others to their holy services. Our Presbyterian forefathers, when they first came to this country, thus conducted their family devotions. History testifies that in some of the towns in which they settled, as in *Belfast*, the traveller in passing through the streets would hear almost from every house, at the hours of morning and evening worship, the sweet melody of psalm singing.

The performance of household worship pertains, first of all, to the husband and head of the family; but the obligation rests equally upon both heads. If the husband is ignorant or negligent, the wife should regard it as her duty and privilege to minister at the family altar, and to lead the devotional services of the family. All care should be taken that family worship should not be forsaken, that the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise should be regularly offered, and that, according to Divine prescription, "The fire should be continually burning upon God's altar," and should never be suffered "to go out."\* Parents training their children in the way they should go, should invite and encourage them to take part with them in conducting the worship of the family. Thus the domestic fellowship is strengthened and sustained; children are prepared to take the place of parents, when they are absent or removed by death, in invoking God's name, and seeking the spiritual benefit of the family, and the advancement of God's glory in the earth. "A seed shall serve Him; it shall be reckoned to the Lord for a genera-

\* Lev. vi. 12.



tion.” “The children of Thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before Thee.” \*

Besides regular family worship, in which the whole household—parents, children, and servants unite, more private united prayers should be offered by the different parties in the household, by husbands and wives together, by parents with their children individually, and by the youthful members with each other. The record of such a practice is frequently met with in the biographies of eminent Christians, and the effects have proved most salutary. The testimony borne by the biographer of *Philip Henry*, the eminent Nonconformist, to such a practice of private united prayer, is singularly instructive. To it may be traced, in a great measure, the early piety and remarkable usefulness for which the different members of his family were distinguished. “In addition to the family prayers, strictly so called, he and his wife constantly prayed together, morning and evening; and never, if they were together at home or abroad, was it intermitted. From his own experience of the benefit of this practice, he would take all opportunities to recommend it to those in this relation, as conducing very much to the comfort of it, and to their furtherance in that which he would often say is the greatest duty of yokefellowes, and that is to do all they can to help one another to heaven. Referring to 1 Peter iii. 7 as a Scripture warrant for this practice, he would say that the husbands and wives are directed that nothing may be done to hinder them from praying together, nor to hinder them in it, nor to spoil the success of these prayers. This sanctifies the relation, and fetches in

\* Psalm xxii. 30 ; cii. 28.

a blessing upon it, makes the comforts of it more sweet, and the cares and crosses of it the more easy, and is an excellent means of preserving and increasing love in the relation. Many to whom he recommended the practice of this duty have blessed God for him, and for his advice concerning it." \*

The *stated times* for family prayer are the morning and evening of each day. The offering of a lamb in the morning, and of another in the evening, constituted the ancient daily sacrifice, which was to be constant and fundamental to all other legal offerings, typifying the blood of atonement, under the covert of which the houses of Israel were to abide continually for safety and cleansing. In like manner, the ordinance of morning and evening family worship is the means of consecrating the household to God, and of drawing down upon it the blessings which flow from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Besides stated family prayer, there are events ever occurring in domestic history, such as family changes, afflictions, separations, bereavements, and deliverances, which constitute providential calls to united prayer. The proper improvement of these will evidence that the household belongs to the families of Israel—the people of the Lord's heritage, to whom pertain "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the promises." In seasons of revival and the prevalence of the power of godliness, the families of our Presbyterian forefathers in those countries noted for true piety, often observed family worship three times a day; and seasons of family fasting and thanksgiving at longer or shorter intervals were

not uncommon. \* In all the aspects in which family religion can be viewed as a Divine gracious institution, as the ordained means of maintaining true religion in the world, and of blessing to churches and nations, family prayer must be regarded as of transcendent importance; and Christians, who are concerned for advancing the glory of God and the salvation of souls, are under the weightiest obligation to maintain and extend its observance.

### III.—SOCIAL AND PUBLIC PRAYER.

Besides private prayer and family worship, there is the fullest warrant for fellowship in social prayer. The social principle is an essential part of our constitution; and this is refined and strengthened by the spiritual renovation of our nature, as its exercise reaches the highest and best ends by renewed communications of grace. The union of Christians to one another in Christ, the Head, implies that they owe to each other mutual duties which cannot be discharged but by associating together for select religious communion. They are enjoined “to esteem one another highly in love,” and to “owe no man anything, but to love one another.” They are to “consider one another,” to teach, admonish, and exhort each other. They are to “bear each other’s

\* When the promised “Spirit of grace and supplication” shall be extensively poured out, we are assured that its influence in penitential mourning for sin will be powerfully felt on the families of different orders and their respective heads—“The land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. . . . All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.” (Zech. xii. 12, 14).

burdens;" to "confess their faults one to another;" to forbear, forgive, and comfort each other; and to "provoke each other to love and good works." These relative duties, so inseparable from vital Christianity, cannot be adequately performed without social prayer. Nor can any work productive of spiritual results be commenced and successfully carried forward save in the spirit and frequent exercise of united prayer and supplication. Judiciously has it been observed that "love, which is the great manifestation of grace, is too communicative in its nature to be always pent up. The electric current will pervade all whose hands are joined in the domestic circle," and it may be affirmed with equal truth, all who are united in the fellowship prayer meeting.\* "We are irresistibly impelled to pray *for* those whom we love; and, as we have opportunity, to pray *with* them. Prayer and spiritual converse are in their very nature social exercises. On this principle church assemblies convene for united devotions; and hence, too, select societies gather together for joint supplication, and loving and sympathetic intercourse."

Family worship is instituted for those who are united by the bonds of natural relationship, and is ordinarily conducted by its Divinely appointed head. United social prayer and fellowship is for those who are drawn together by a common religious profession, or by the bond of the same indwelling Spirit. It furnishes a more sweet fellowship than that of the public church assembly; and the gifts and graces of the members of the prayer meeting are called forth

\* "Thoughts on Family Worship." By Rev. James W. Alexander, D.D. ("Christian Fireside Library," p. 201).



for mutual help and edification and combined religious effort. Such an ordinance is plainly of Divine institution, has been observed and much valued by God's people in all ages, and has ever been productive of the greatest benefit to the church, and to the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth. In the earliest records of revelation, during the patriarchal ages, in the days of Enoch, it is declared, "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord,"\* or, as in the margin, "to call themselves, or to be called by the name of the Lord." The professors of true religion then made a more marked separation from the ungodly, and united together for prayer and spiritual fellowship. At the close of the Old Testament dispensation, those "who feared the Lord spake often one to another" in united prayer and spiritual converse, and had marked tokens of Divine approval and acceptance. "The Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and called upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels."†

The united prayer meeting is commended to us as a Divine ordinance by the precept and example of our Lord and His apostles, and as a means of rich and manifold blessing. Under the former economy Jehovah's promise was—"In all places where I record my name I will come unto you, and bless you."‡ The Saviour, assuming a Divine title and prerogative, holds forth the promise of His gracious presence and blessing to even small assemblies gathered in His name for united prayer. "If two

\* Gen. iv. 26.

† Mal. iii. 16, 17.

‡ Exod. xx. 24.



of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." \* In this full and condescending assurance the Saviour intimates that "wherever a few devout worshippers assemble to call upon His name, they shall be brought into the presence chamber of the king. The promise is unconditional; and as it is expressed in the present time, it implies that the gracious One who utters it is ready to receive and bless all who come to Him, and infinitely willing to grant them the most familiar intercourse. If the Saviour be thus in the midst of two or three gathered together in His name, shall we not, both in regard to His honour and for our own unspeakable advantage, earnestly desire this fellowship? If we really love Him, how can we keep away from the place where His company may be certainly expected? If we value His gracious presence, shall we not repair to the ordinance in which He engages that it will, without fail, be conferred?" †

During our Lord's personal ministry on earth He frequently met with His disciples for united social prayer; and the longest outflowings of His spirit were in scenes of such private fellowship. When He took them "apart into a desert place" to "rest awhile," He expounded more fully His parables; the "tender emotions of His heart gushed forth, and the combined graces of His character appeared in the most attractive lustre." The assembly on the mount

\* Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

† "The Fellowship Meeting." Works, Doctrinal and Practical, by Rev. Thomas Houston, D.D., vol. ii., p. 295, 296.

of transfiguration was a *select prayer meeting*. “As He prayed, He was transfigured;” and the surpassing lustre of His Divine and mediatorial glory overpowered the disciples, and lightened up the scene with remarkable splendour. The meeting with the disciples in the upper chamber, when “with great desire” He ate with them the last Passover, and instituted the sacrament of the Supper, was one for united prayer. When He repaired to the garden where His soul-agony began, it was to the place whither “Jesus had ofttimes resorted with His disciples.”\* And when He went with the selected three into the “inner circle,” it was in order to pray “more earnestly” with united prayer and in the closest fellowship, and to make His request to “Him that was able to save Him from death.” After the Saviour’s resurrection, His presence and blessing were vouchsafed to small assemblies gathered for social worship. On the evening of the day in which He arose from the dead, He stood in the midst of the disciples assembled in the upper room, and said — “Peace be unto you;” and to confirm their faith, He showed them His hands and His side. Eight days after, when they were convened for united prayer, He again appeared among them; and to Thomas and the rest He showed His glory and condescension. After His ascension, the apostles were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem, and wait for the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit. This they did, in company with other disciples, continuing for ten days in succession in united social prayer. At length, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the answer was given in an abundant effusion of the

\* John xviii. 2.

Spirit; and the new economy was inaugurated in connection with the exercise of a select private fellowship meeting.

The first triumphs of the Gospel, and the rapid progress of Christianity, as recorded in the Book of Acts, were frequently seen as the returns of united social prayer. The apostles were filled with the Spirit as they prayed. Peter was delivered from persecution, and rescued from death, in answer to the continued earnest prayers of the societies scattered throughout Jerusalem. The blessing from above upon the humble prayer meeting of the women by the river side at Philippi was the means of gaining the first trophy of grace in Europe, in the conversion of Lydia; to be followed by innumerable future triumphs in this quarter of the globe, and the spread from it of the knowledge of salvation to the ends of the earth. \*

The ordinance of the social prayer meeting has been ever remarkably owned as a powerful instrument for preserving and spreading the truth, for the planting and revival of the church, for support and consolation in seasons of affliction and persecution; and, in recent times, it has been singularly owned of God for preparing and calling forth devoted missionaries, and for the conversion of multitudes to the faith of Christ—Jews and Gentiles, in Pagan, Anti-christian, and Mahommedan lands. From the manifest and rich blessings which have been already enjoyed in connection with this institution, and from the Divine command and promise, we have the amplest encouragement to expect a much more extensive and abundant harvest of blessing, when

\* Acts xii. 5; xvi. 13, 14.

the Spirit of grace and supplication shall have been plentifully poured out.

The form of the social prayer meeting, which is accordant with Scriptural institution, and which is the ordained means of spiritual blessing, is that in which the constituent members are of one heart and mind in the common profession of the truth, and in which they are united in heart by the possession of the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Differing from general prayer meetings, as they are found in the church in modern times—in which the minister or some other individual exclusively conducts the devotional exercises and gives instruction—they are designed for mutual exhortation and consolation. The members are associated to pray with and for one another; to have fellowship together, by communicating their gifts and graces for mutual benefit; and by “speaking the truth in love,” to “grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.”\* They unite in prayer for mutual help in work and trials; and the counsels which they take, and the plans which they form at the throne of grace, when carried forward by the Spirit, and in the exercise of united prayer, are productive of the greatest benefits to the church, and will hereafter be effective of the universal establishment of the Redeemer’s kingdom in the earth.

The special *advantages* of social spiritual converse and united prayer are manifold and most important. As distinguished from other religious institutions in the united prayer meeting, the diversified spiritual gifts of the members of the church are combined for mutual profit, and the preservation, increase, and dif-

\* Zech. viii. 21 ; Jer. xxxiii. 2.



fusion of religious knowledge are imparted. Mutual faithful exhortation, tending to the protection and welfare of Christians, is given; the spirit of true piety is nourished and strengthened, support and comfort to fellow-Christians in trials are ministered, and they are excited to the discharge of the duties which are dictated by brotherly love; a public liberal spirit is stimulated and increased, and a happy influence is exerted on all other religious duties, public and private, personal and relative. Such being the numerous and great benefits that we are taught to expect from united social prayer, should not all Christians labour to have this precious institution seen in existence, and vigorously maintained throughout the church?

The testimony borne by eminent saints of Christ in different ages to the value and blessed influence of such meetings for united prayer has been uniform and decided. Thus in the primitive, post-apostolic period of the church, we are told—"Christians would assemble by or before daylight for prayer and praise. The evening service, which continued an hour, was similar. Nor was it only the most devout and zealous of them that pursued this daily routine of religious observances. The place of worship was thronged with all ranks of the faithful, as much during the morning and evening service as during that of the Sabbath; and they would have afforded good reason to suspect the sincerity of their religious profession who should in those days of Christian simplicity and devotedness have confined themselves to the hebdomadal ordinance of the sanctuary."\* The excellent *John Hunter* says—"I look upon prayer

\* Coleman's "Christian Antiquities."



meetings as the most profitable exercises, except the public preaching, in which Christians can engage. They have a distinct tendency to kill a worldly, trifling spirit, to draw down a Divine blessing on all our concerns, compose differences, and enkindle at least and maintain the flame of Divine love among brethren." The devoted *Felix Neff*, who had much experience in the work of spiritual awakening and revival, testifies—"I am confirmed in the opinion that whosoever, even were he an angel, would neglect such meetings under any pretext whatever, is very little to be depended upon, and cannot be ranked among the sheep of Christ's fold."

#### IV.—PUBLIC PRAYER.

Public prayer in the congregation assembled for worship, although a form of social prayer, differs in some respects from that of the select fellowship meeting. In the latter, the members being called to exhort and edify and comfort one another, may and ought to engage severally in conducting devotional exercises. But in public worship, one—generally the minister—presents the prayers, as the organ of the congregation, and blesses them in the name of the Lord, by praying with and for them. There is at the same time the closest spiritual fellowship between the minister and the people, when they appear before God, as a waiting assembly, offering silently and from the heart their petitions, which are audibly expressed on their behalf, and looking heavenward and expecting an answer.

The position of an assembled congregation engaged in public prayer is one of the most solemn and affecting on earth. While all parts of the sanctuary services should be performed both by the

minister and the people in a devotional spirit, in this they enter into the audience-chamber of the king—they come into the holiest of all, pour out the thoughts and desires of their hearts, and utter their words before the Lord. They stand in the immediate presence of the Majesty in the heavens, to take hold of His strength, to send their prayers into His temple, and to realise, in the felt tokens of His gracious presence, that the place is to them “dreadful,”—“the house of God and the gate of heaven.” It deeply concerns all who engage in the service of public prayer to be duly impressed with the solemnity and importance of the work; and especially should the minister, who is the mouth-piece of the congregation, seek to feel that he treads on holy ground, and that “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about Him.”\* Of *evils* to be guarded against in offering public prayer, there is, on the one hand, the use of *prescribed forms* of prayer, and, on the other, the depreciating of the devotional services of the sanctuary, and esteeming them of less importance than the preaching of the word. There are strong and insuperable objections to the exclusive use of “*Liturgies*,” or prescribed forms of prayer, in public worship. These were first introduced in the “Dark Ages,” and arose from the ignorance and incompetence of the clergy; the same cause which led to the disuse of the Divinely-appointed ordinance of preaching. At the period of the Reformation forms of public prayer were laid aside in the Reformed churches, or only partially admitted while the Reformation was in its first imperfect stages.

\* Psalm lxxxix. 7.

Hence it has become a peculiar characteristic of the popish system, that it makes the liturgical service nearly the whole of public worship, and that the prayers are offered in a dead language; while in the Protestant, but especially in the Presbyterian church, the sermon is the most prominent part of the service. The objections to confining the services and prayers of God's people to prescribed forms are various and weighty. The practice is without Scriptural warrant. It is evidently not in accordance with the example of our Lord and His apostles. It cramps spiritual desires, inverts the true order of prayer, restrains the exercise of the understanding and of the faculties of the soul, renders negligent and slothful in the observance of providence, and leads to a mere lip service. No forms, however excellent, can possibly suit every case, whether of the individual or of the family and the church. While it is manifestly wrong in congregations to undervalue the devotional services of the sanctuary, it is culpable in ministers to neglect special preparation for offering up public prayers, while they lay out all their strength in preparing discourses. This, which it is to be feared, is too common, is suggestive of unbelief toward God, and of unconcern for the spiritual edification of the people. No part of the official service of the house of God requires more fixed solemn thought, and more careful preparation, than that of presenting the united prayers of the congregation. To speak to God on the people's behalf; to be the organ of their heartfelt desires; to present to the glorious hearer of prayer the expression of their wants, convictions, and internal frames, to fill the mouth with arguments, to take hold of God's strength, to wrestle for a blessing, and to continue

pleading till it be obtained—these are functions of no ordinary solemnity; and the person who performs them should at all times feel that “the place whereon he stands is holy ground.” To deliver God’s message to men, as is done in preaching the word, is a sacred and responsible task. Not less responsible, and even more solemn, is it to speak for men to God. The public prayers of a minister are to some extent the models of the devotion of His people. He that leads them in prayer in reality teaches them, as far as man can do, to pray. Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath, the appointed channel through which flow to him the great blessings of redemption.

The *spiritual nature* of the exercise in nowise precludes the necessity of special preparation for its performance. In no case does the aid of the Spirit suspend or set aside the exercise of our own faculties. He uniformly works through them as His instruments, and in strict accordance with our rational nature. When He is promised, as the “Spirit of grace and supplication,” this, instead of encouraging indolence or indifference, should lead to the full exercise of all the purified and elevated faculties of the mind and heart. He “helps our infirmities.”\* (The original Greek term properly means—“lifts together,” or “helps over against us.”) He thus assists, invigorates, and elevates the internal faculties. As *practical directions* for conducting public prayer, the following hints may be found useful:—The *frequent diligent study of the Divine word, meditation, and much prayer in secret*, are primary and essential requisites. Only those who live in the element of

\* Romans viii. 26.



prayer, and who “in everything make their requests known to God with supplication and thanksgiving,” are prepared to present in a proper manner the prayers of the assembled congregation, and in answer to them, will draw down upon them blessings from the throne of grace. Observable blemishes in public prayer, which give weight to the most plausible objections against extempore prayer in public worship, should be carefully avoided. Those which commonly arise from *defective piety* and *negligent preparation* are such as the habitual use of a formula of words or frequent interjections, the names and titles of God used at random, and particular favourite phrases. All provincialisms of speech, vulgarisms, and grammatical errors in language should be shunned; and much care should be taken in the use of current phrases, which even educated men are prone to adopt. Earnest prayer is always definite; our petitions should therefore be definite also. This, however, forms no proper excuse for trivial minuteness of detail in public prayer. It is a grievous abuse to pray formally to God, while in reality we are *praying at* a fellow-creature, flattering or reviling in prayer, and exciting prejudices and aspirations, whether religious, social, or political. It is fearful in the extreme, while approaching God, so pure, majestic, and benevolent, to indulge in human passions and prejudices, or to present to the Hearer of Prayer hollow flatteries, or judgments concerning fellow-creatures. All low, irreverent terms and unsuitable epithets should be avoided in addressing God in public prayer. The proper language for the accepted sinner before the mercy-seat is that of profound veneration and heartfelt contrition for sin. Vague and aimless language in prayer clearly in-



dicates a vacant mind, devoid of true spiritual affections. To show the absence of any intelligible order in public and social prayer, and to have a mixed medley of petitions about a great variety of matters, is strongly objectionable.

As all believing prayer contains *arguments*, expressed or implied, taken from the Divine character and perfections, which are designed to enforce the petitions, the person who leads in public prayer should, by meditation and deep study of God's word, by growing acquaintance with God's character, earnest concern about Christ's cause and people, and by the exercise of lively faith, take hold of God's covenant—in wrestling importunity seek the blessing. *Simplicity and plainness of expression*, and the skilful *use of Scriptural language*, should characterise public prayer, as any use of random or inappropriate epithets and attributes in addressing God should be shunned. The titles and perfections which are mentioned in speaking to Him are arguments to enforce the petitions presented; and we should ever seek to use them in due connection, and in immediate relation to what we supplicate in prayer. The employment of *high figurative expressions* and *inflated language* in public prayer is singularly inapplicable. A person who is really in earnest in pleading for the precious life, has no time or disposition for word-painting. A child crying to a father, "who is able and ready to help," is the appropriate act and attitude of one who takes upon him to speak to the most high God, and to plead in the great congregation about matters of infinite importance. The prayer of Moses for Israel, that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, that of Jehoshaphat, and

that of Daniel, \* are inspired instances of solemnity, simplicity, and fervour in intercessory prayer; while the prayers of the apostle Paul for the churches, recorded in the close of his various epistles, are striking models of prayers, both in regard to the matter and spirit, which ministers ought to present on behalf of those to whom they minister and of the whole church.

The value of public prayer, when offered in a right spirit by ministers and congregations, can scarcely be duly estimated. It is the most solemn profession of trust and dependence on God in covenant, for all support and consolation; it is an act of open surrender and dedication to His service; it is an eminent means of grace and blessing. Like as at the opening of the Christian dispensation, the Holy Spirit descended in copious effusion in answer to united prayer, so in much abundance spiritual and heavenly blessings are given as the fruit of the earnest prayers of the assemblies of Zion. Not unfrequently, in congregations convened for public worship on Sabbath, the blessing on the word preached, and on other ordinances, has come and the Saviour's presence has been realised at the time of the concluding prayer. Thus have been fulfilled to expectant worshippers great and precious promises. "The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence." "I will make them and the places around my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." †

\* Num. xiv. 15-20; 1 Kings viii.; 2 Chron. xx.; Dan. ix.

† Isaiah iv. 5; Ezek. xxxiv. 26.

## CHAPTER VI.

### INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

WE are taught by the *Westminster Divines* that in the preface to the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father, which art in heaven," we are required to pray *with* and *for others*. Praying *with* others is social prayer, praying *for* others is intercessory prayer.

The importance and value of intercessory prayer may be seen from various considerations. The spirit of true religion, and the nature of prayer itself, assign a prominent place to this duty in all religious services. The fraternal love which the gospel inculcates and inspires require us to seek blessings for all men from the hearer of prayer. The spirit of prayer is wholly devoid of all selfishness, and is eminently enlarged and expansive. Justly has it been said—"No man can pray for himself acceptably, if he does not pray for others." And, in the expressive language of *Augustine*, it is suitably declared—"That if our petitions are only for ourselves, they return on ourselves; but that if we pray for all, we have the benefit of all for whom we pray praying for us."

The *grounds* of intercessory prayer are the mutual necessities and the reciprocal obligations of human beings, as possessed of a common humanity, and dependent on God from whom descends every good and perfect gift, for all the deliverances and supplies that we need. If we desire spiritual blessings for ourselves these can only come to us through the

intercession of Christ; and this is carried on by His presenting with acceptance the supplications for them which are put into His censer, which He holds in His hand. The value which we set upon these blessings is indicated by the earnestness with which we seek the prayers of saints on our behalf for their enjoyment. And if we lay such stress upon the intercessions of fellow-Christians, this implies that we feel duly our obligation to be frequently engaged as intercessors for them.

Everywhere throughout the Divine word — by precept, example, and the recorded beneficial efforts of intercessory prayer—we are taught the inestimable value of this kind of supplication. Indeed, a very large part of all that the Scripture teaches on the subject of prayer is taken up with inculcating the duty, and exhibiting the example and benefits of intercessory prayer. As our Lord when on earth spent much of the time of His public service in prayer, and not unfrequently continued whole nights in prayer, His petitions to the Father were presented chiefly not for Himself, but for those whom He came to redeem, and for the good of mankind in all ages to the end of the world. In the model of prayer which He taught His disciples, they are taught in the preface to pray for others, and afterwards to present petitions for the glorifying of God's name, the coming of His kingdom, and for doing His will, in order to benefit and bless the world, before they are instructed to offer direct individual petitions for themselves.

The practice of interceding for others has been seen in all ages since Divine revelation was given, and has been always considered the privilege and delight of the most distinguished servants of God.



Thus Abraham pleaded with wrestling importunity for Divine sparing mercy towards the doomed cities of the plain. Moses interceded for Israel; and in the conflict with Amalek the victory is ascribed to the instancy of the praying company on the hill-top, rather than to the valour of Joshua and the trained soldiers engaged in the battle field. In emergencies of difficulty and danger, and in seasons of trial and public judgments, the intercessions of faithful men were the means of protection, of warding off threatened danger, and working deliverance. The prayers of Isaiah and Hezekiah and Jehoshaphat saved Israel, and brought destruction upon their enemies. In like manner, the interceding supplications of Ezra and Nehemiah, of Esther and Mordecai, of Elijah, Daniel, and the prophets of the Restoration, were answered by wonders of power wrought for the defence and deliverance of God's people, and by the spirit of wisdom and courage which was given to them in the conflict with powerful enemies, and in their labours in the work of God.

In the New Testament record, under the clearer gospel light, the duty and privilege of intercessory prayer are declared with greater fulness, and exemplified with greater frequency and enlargement. After the Pentecostal visitation, the spirit of grace and supplication rested on the infant Christian church, causing the abundant outflow of holy graces, and impelling to self-denied and vigorous sustained efforts for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the conversion of the world. The assembled apostles and disciples prayed for one another, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word with boldness. They sought the conversion of the world to Christ, in fulfilment of



ancient promise and prophecy ; and multitudes were raised up and qualified to go forth to implement the great commission—to preach the gospel to every creature ; and myriads in many lands, as the answer of these prayers, were rescued from ignorance and idolatry, and were won to the faith of Christ.

As the Apostle Paul laboured more abundantly than all his fellow-apostles, so also his services were conducted and his trials endured in the spirit of prayer. This was the secret of his rich fruitfulness and manifold success. His prayers, recorded throughout his epistles and especially at their close, evince the great stress which he laid on intercessory prayer for himself and others, and his deep views of its important effects. Again and again he solicits for himself the prayers of Christian converts for objects the most important—as that the word of the Lord may “run and be glorified,” that he may be delivered from wicked men, that he may be helped and have a prosperous journey by the will of God, and that his service to the poor saints may be accepted. His own intercessory prayers for the churches are frequent, earnest, and singularly expressive. Three times, in one chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he presents distinct prayers for those to whom he writes ; and twice, in each of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, he intercedes for the Christian converts. Besides the weighty and comprehensive petitions that He offers for the members of the churches, and for fellow-believers, how constant and earnest are his intercessions for the churches ! Writing to the church in Rome, he says—“God is my witness, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”\* To the Ephesians—

\* Romans i. 9.

“I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” \* To the Philippians he says—“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.” † And addressing the Colossian church, he says—“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.” ‡ Those who are truly prayerful, who resort to prayer as their blessed privilege and darling employment, have the greater number of their prayers intercessory; and the largest part of their daily private and social prayers have immediate reference rather to others than to themselves. True vigorous Christians, who are made sensible that they have many errands daily to the throne of grace, live not to themselves, but for the glory of God and the good of others; and the chief way in which they act for their good is to give them a place in their frequent petitions at the mercy-seat—it is to make mention of them daily to the hearer of prayer. This true Christians have always done throughout life; and not unfrequently at death devoted servants of Christ have given expression to the last desires of faith, by pleading for the cause of Christ and the conversion of the world, and by asking blessings for the church, rather than praying immediately for themselves. Our martyred forefathers offered their last petitions that God would bless the remnant left, that He would arise and plead His own cause, that He would come back with His departed glory, and bless the earth. It is related of the youthful Edward Sixth, that among the last petitions which he uttered in dying, he supplicated that his kingdom might be

\* Ephes. i. 16.

† Phil. i. 3, 4.

‡ Col. i. 9.

“delivered from *Papistry*.” An aged Christian, at the point of death, when asked by his pastor what he chiefly wished to be sought in prayer, answered—“Pray for the whole family of mankind.” The venerable translator and martyr, *Tyndale*, prayed at the stake—“Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.” The signal which an English noble\* gave to the executioner, before the axe fell, was—“Let the whole earth be filled with His glory.” Many of the excellent ones of the earth, who are now in glory, have died in pouring out their hearts in prayers for fellow-saints, and for the church and the world, and with the assurance that their prayers would be heard, and in due time graciously answered.

The habit of intercessory prayer is the means of conferring numerous and great benefits, not only upon those for whom supplication is offered, but also upon the suppliants themselves. The Lord is ever wont to connect the enjoyment of special benefits with benevolent effort. As in relation to the donations of Christian liberality for the relief either of temporal or spiritual wants, it is “more blessed to give than to receive,” so it is in the matter of prayer. To forget and lose sight of ourselves, and to seek earnestly and only the good of others, is the surest way of increasing our own spiritual riches. When Abraham pleaded for Sodom, he was admitted to the nearest and most intimate intercourse with the Angel of the Covenant. Moses obtained tokens of favour and acceptance and special manifestations of the Divine glory, when he interceded that the Lord would turn away His wrath from Israel, and that His presence might go with them. And it is note-

\* The Earl of Derby.

worthy that the Lord is said to have turned the captivity of Job, *when he prayed* for His and their friends.\* During our Lord's personal ministry on earth those suppliants who came to Him seeking mercy for others obtained a richer blessing for themselves. The woman of Syrophenicia, in entreating deliverance for her daughter, had her "great faith" accepted and commended. The Centurion who sought the Saviour's interposition in behalf of his palsied servant is commended as specially approved—"Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."† So has it ever been, and thus will it always be in the Divine economy of dispensing favour and bestowing blessing. Those who pray and labour most for the benefit of others are themselves doubly blessed. Their hearts become more sensible of appropriating the Divine goodness. The benefits conferred upon others, in answer to their prayers, enrich themselves. They ripen in all the elements of a holy and noble character. They grow happier and stronger for spiritual efforts, and their soul is replenished for good by the habit of unwearyed intercession.

A few of the more important subjects of intercessory prayer may be briefly noted. Of these we select—

#### I.—MUTUAL PRAYERS FOR BELIEVERS.

An eminent exercise of intercessory prayer is that of the mutual prayers of fellow-believers. These are prompted by the relation in which they stand to one another as members of the household of faith, and by the "spirit of adoption," whereby they "cry,

\* Job xlii. 10.

† Matthew viii. 8.



Abba, Father.” The best evidence that we can give of belonging to the redeemed family of God, is the heartfelt interest which we take in all its members on earth, by continual prayers, supplications, and thanksgivings on their behalf. This, too, is a chief way of cultivating the communion of saints on earth. We speak to one another Divine truths, as we address to God words in prayer for this purpose, looking by this means to a higher communion—“These words have we spoken unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” \*

For brethren in the flesh, and united to us as they stand connected with particular churches, we should offer frequent special prayer and supplication; but the universal church of the first-born presents a far wider range of loving interest and earnest pleading in prayer. Believers scattered throughout the world form one spiritual mystical body, united to one living Head, and animated by the same indwelling spirit. They are “members one of another;” and therefore in labour and suffering, in joys and sorrows, they are bound to minister mutual help by sympathetic feeling and by intercessory prayer. Thus does the blessed Head continually in His intercession in heaven. All who would enjoy its benefits must, like our Advocate within the veil, pray not only for ministers, but likewise for all that believe on Him through their word. †

\* 1 John i. 3.

† “What lively mutual interest should there be throughout the family; and how can such sanctified sympathy show itself more appropriately than by intercession? In proportion as Christ assimilates them to Himself will their hearts go forth in supplications for one another.”—The “*Mercy-Seat*.” By Augustus C. Thompson, D.D., p. 224.



Prayer is ever to be regarded as a means of grace and blessing, like the preaching of the word, and the dispensation of other religious ordinances. Even when these are administered by approved servants, and in a manner pleasing to God, they may not be followed by the desired fruits. They are a "savour of death unto death" unto some, even when they are unto God "a sweet savour through Christ." \* While we should always engage in prayer for ourselves and others as a main duty and a means of spiritual blessing, we should regard the blessing as coming from God alone, and should leave it to His infinite wisdom to give or withhold it, at what time or in what manner seems good to Him. Denials of requests for particular benefits, or delays in granting them, are not inconsistent with God hearing and answering prayer. God may deny a particular request because it would not be for His glory and His servant's good to grant it. Just as a wise, kind parent may withhold from the child whom he loves what he knows would be injurious to him, however eagerly desired. The particular request may be denied, and a higher and better blessing bestowed in its place, as when the Apostle Paul eagerly sought that "*the thorn in the flesh*" might be taken away from him. Instead, the assurance was given him, fitted for all times and circumstances of labour and trial—"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." † Delays in answering prayer are often ordered for signal and important benefits to God's saints. They serve to reprove the undevout hurry and impatience to which believers themselves are liable. They try faith,

\* 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

teach patience, awaken to more earnest petitions, and confirm the habit of prayer. Thus to the importunate suppliant the value of the mercy when conferred is enhanced, and a higher revenue of glory and praise redounds to God for all His benefits.

The Apostle Paul, who is exhibited throughout his epistles as a bright example of praying for fellow-labourers, and of ever desiring their prayers for himself, represents the connecting and crowning part of "the panoply of God," which the Christian warrior is to take to himself—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." \* This watching for occasions of prayer for fellow-saints, and persevering supplication on their behalf, show that in larger numbers they have a chief place in the desires of the heart, that their individual cases are present to the mind, and that their labours and trials, their privileges and afflictions, in life and in death, ever excite the liveliest interest, and supply errands to the mercy-seat.

The obligation of the duty of interceding for all saints has been felt by believers in all ages. Those who have most practised it have been saints of a higher growth, distinguished by an earnest Christian spirit, and by singular usefulness. Their being thus characterised has often been the result of the many prayers of fellow-believers on their behalf. Amidst the manifold evils that exist in the world, and the lukewarmness that is in the church, it is matter of devout thanksgiving that there is much intercession daily of the scattered family of faith for the cause of Christ, and for all saints wherever they are found,

\* Ephesians vi. 18.

and whatever be their condition. From closets and scenes of private retirement—from thousands of family altars, in ejaculations poured forth from the thronged thoroughfares of worldly business, or in scenes of personal danger and affliction, these intercessions are continually ascending to the audience-chamber of the king, and are bringing down innumerable blessings of help and deliverance upon those for whom they are offered. There are times when Christians are moved to plead with special urgency for others, whether as individuals or families, or particular churches. Such seasons should be regarded as the call of the Spirit, and should be improved by earnest intercession. “For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found.”\* Special motives to prayer should be taken as intimations that God is ready to give an answer for good. When we yield to them, it will not unfrequently be found that God has listened to the voice of His servants, and granted largely the deliverances and blessings to others for which they made importunate petitions.†

Besides daily intercessions for fellow-saints, true

\* Psalm xxxii. 6.

† In the preface to a late edition of “Boston’s little work on ‘*Personal and Family Fasting*,’ by the Rev. *Moody Stuart*, it is appositely stated that no person may expect to make progress in the Divine life, or to come to the assurance of hope, who is not accustomed to set apart special times for self-examination and prayer, and who does not observe these, and not at lengthened intervals.” Dr. Chalmers was in the habit of constantly observing such times of retirement, which he termed his “*Dedication Days* ;” and to the spiritual light and strength derived from such a habit of private devotion may be ascribed much of his eminent usefulness.

believers have been accustomed to set apart particular times for presenting special prayer for individual saints, and for congregations, and communities dispersed throughout the world. When these have been devoutly observed, either by individuals retired, or by a number of prayerful ones assembled together, they have often yielded rich stores of blessing. The Lord has made bare His arm, and has wrought manifold salvation for His people in midst of the earth. "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary." \*

What a great and unspeakable privilege is it to be of the household of faith, and to have a part, by interceding for all saints, in imparting to them the blessings which they need; or ourselves, in receiving the gracious benefits of which fellow-saints are earnestly seeking that we should partake! At the head of the praying multitude—the members of His invisible church—stands our great High Priest, offering up continually much perfumed incense of His mediation. This is intermingled with the prayers of thousands of believing hearts on earth. He can separate, give effect to, and apply them to every one for whom they are offered. What a wondrous privilege to be included in such a circle, when we are brought within "the secret place of the Most High"—the centre of gracious manifestations. "There the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore." †

In interceding for one another believers reap themselves great and eminent benefits. Not only are they instruments of blessing, but they are themselves doubly blessed. The habit raises them

\* Psalm lxviii. 9.

† Psalm cxxxiii. 3.



above selfishness, and expands and liberalises the heart. It draws forth and greatly strengthens the love of the brethren, and leads to experience the sweetness and excellency of the communion of saints. Conscious of the gracious help in arduous duties, and conflicts, and trials, which they themselves obtain through the prayers of brethren, the heart is drawn to delight in the one living Head, from whom all blessing comes. Enjoying this high privilege, well may we exclaim with the godly *Rutherford*—"O that Christ would break down the old narrow vessels of these ebb souls, and make fair, deep, and wide souls to hold a sea and full tide, flowing over all its banks of Christ's love!" In learning more and more to *pray for all saints*, we shall gird on more firmly the whole armour of God, and fight out more vigorously the good fight of faith; and with "golden censers" of praise, and "golden vials full of odours," which are "the prayers of saints," we shall offer a service acceptable to God, and sing in the presence of the Lamb the new song of the redeemed.

## II.—PRAYERS FOR PASTORS, AND OF PASTORS FOR THEIR FLOCKS.

There is no relation more solemn and responsible than that of ministers and people, and none that entails consequences more weighty, of good or of evil. The pastoral office is ordained of Christ for the purpose of collecting into His fold, and feeding the flock which He has purchased by His blood; and pastors are His ascension-gifts to the church for these high ends. No relation is more dependent on prayer in all its aspects than this. The gift to the church of a true spiritual teacher is that of one whom the Redeemer has Himself prepared; and it



may not be expected till it is asked in fervent prayer. Ministers, as men and Christians, are exposed to temptations, and conflicts, and fears, in common with others; and besides, from their office and work, they are exposed to peculiar onsets and trials. The great adversary knows that the most effectual way to injure the truth, and to mar God's work in the church, is to prevail against ministers, tempt them to gross sins, seduce them to unfaithfulness and apostacy, or lead them to be negligent, vain, and worldly. They have therefore special need of aid from the church's prayers against these insidious and potent temptations. Besides, no part of ministerial work can be performed aright without help sought and obtained from above. For the study and understanding of the word the minister requires Divine teaching; and to apply it to men's consciences for conviction, edification, and comfort, he is entirely dependent on supernatural influence. To preserve worship pure and entire, and to be faithful in the exercise of government and discipline, his sufficiency is not of himself, but of God. None of these, and no other ministerial duties, can be performed acceptably to the Head of the Church but in the spirit and habit of prayer by the pastor himself, and through much prayer of the church on his behalf. The abundant blessing upon ministerial labours generally comes this way. The familiar remark, namely, of a "*Praying people makes a preaching minister,*" is full of important meaning, and is of wide and general application. By knowing that he is called to preach the gospel to those who are waiting to hear what the Lord will say through him, and who are travailing with him in prayer for the saving effects of the word, he will be led to a deeper study of the sacred oracles,

and to a more discriminating and pointed application. He will value the utterance that is given in answer to believing prayer, and will have confidence and hope that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. It is commonly in this connection, when a people are brought to assign a frequent and large place in their intercessions for a minister, that he is led to cherish a deep and awful sense of his responsibility to speak the word with boldness, to "preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," and to watch for souls as one that must give account. In the secret chambers, at the family altar, in the social meeting, as well as in the sanctuary, the minister should be the object of special prayer; and even in occasional ejaculations, his labours, wants, and trials should be presented to God, that he may be supported and blessed and made a blessing. Appropriately has it been observed, that "the best parishioner is one who daily and earnestly commends his pastor to the God of all grace, who never sees him pass the aisles nor rise in the pulpit without breathing a devout ejaculation for him. Such are the Aarons and Hurs of the Lord's host."\* The abounding of a spirit of prayer for ministers in the church, leading the members to earnest wrestling for them and their work, and to "continue instant in prayer" on their behalf, will often prove the precursor and sign of the coming blessing. It was in answer to the prayers of the church in Jerusalem, continued throughout the night, that Peter was delivered from enemies and death, and restored to liberty. When the Christians assembled at Snorrs had spent the night, after a

\* "The Moroy-Seat." By Augustus C. Thomson, D.D., p. 233.

communion, in earnest united prayer, the power of the Spirit descended on Monday, on the preaching of *Livingstone*, and *five hundred* persons awakened became monuments of saving mercy. If the church would have a ministry such as the age wants, spiritually minded, successful labourers, we must have churches and congregations showing themselves fit for the Lord's work in the earth—earnest, self-sacrificing, devoted Christians; and, above all, such as are ever ready to hold up their hands and cheer the hearts of ministers, by importunate persevering prayers for them. Like the Macedonian Christians, they will “first give themselves to the Lord,” and then to their ministers by the will of God,\* for any service and sacrifice to which, in expounding and enforcing the Divine will, they call them.

Pastors are under a like obligation to intercede for their people, as the people are to pray for them. They should always do so from the conviction that the work in which they are engaged is wholly the Lord's; and whether they sow or reap, He alone can give the increase and blessing. They owe a debt of gratitude to those who esteem, love, and submit to them; and this will be best repaid by fervent prayers on their behalf. If any are to be awakened and to desire spiritual benefit from their ministry, this will mainly come in answer to earnest, persevering prayer which they offer continually for the success of the word preached, and for the salvation of those to whom the message is addressed. The Apostle Paul is a striking and beautiful instance of an approved successful minister, who always laboured in prayer and supplication for the churches, and who

\* 2 Cor. viii. 5.

constantly sought an interest himself in the prayers of Christians to whom he was sent, expecting, as the result of such prayers, deliverance and success in his labours. Such have ever been the spirit and way of the most devoted servants of Christ in the church. The apostle prayed for Timothy night and day; and without ceasing he made mention of the churches in his prayers to God. Of *John Welch* of Ayr, one of the most illustrious of our Presbyterian confessors, it is recorded that, besides much daily intercession, he was used to rise at midnight to pour out his heart before God. When expostulated with by his wife that he would injure his health, he would reply—“It was an awful matter to have to account for the care of three thousand souls.” Retiring to his garden for solitary communion, he frequently spent most of the night in prayer, and at times he expressed wonder how a Christian could remain in bed all night without rising to spend a season in prayer and praise. The excellent *Dr. Payson* of America, during the whole period of his ministry, spent one whole day of the week in prayer and strict fasting, and a chief part of the exercises consisted in seeking a blessing on the word which he preached, and on the flock to which he ministered. The missionary *Bernard*, besides special seasons set apart for prayer, frequently retired to the woods and continued all night in wrestling prayer for the church, and for the conversion of the Indians. When *Oberlin*, the devoted pastor of a flock scattered in a mountainous region, was, through age, no longer able to labour among them, he had written out in a large roll a list of all the names, amounting to some four hundred, and he was accustomed every day to retire into the room in which it lay spread out on a table, that he



might pray for them individually by name. Who can doubt that he thus made "full proof of his ministry," and that, when laid aside from active service, his flock reaped spiritual benefit not a little from the prayers of their aged pastor?

The prayers of people for their ministers, and of ministers for their flocks, are the most remunerative, and bring the richest returns to both the parties concerned. Their mutual intercourse is hallowed and rendered productive of reciprocal blessings. When they meet in the sanctuary and in other assemblies, or in scenes of rejoicing, or affliction and trial, they experience that it is good to draw near to God, and are made sensible that God is among them of a truth—"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man his friend."\* Those members of the church who pray earnestly for their ministers, and who ask for them messages from God and a blessing on their work, receive gracious answers not unfrequently in the discourse being specially adapted to their case, resolving their doubts, dispelling their fears, and bringing to them the joys of salvation. Pastors likewise ministering to a prayerful people feel their burdens lightened, are strengthened in the Lord, and made to rejoice that their "line has fallen in pleasant places," and "the inheritance which they have got excels in beauty." The true interest and certain way of enlargement and blessing, equally for pastors and people, would be to give themselves more to the practice of frequent fervent prayer and mutual intercession. Towards the close of life, *Matthew Henry* said on this subject—"Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and have years added to my days, I would be much more

\* Proverbs xxvii. 17.



frequent in my supplications at the throne of grace. We sustain a mighty loss by reading so much, and praying so little." It is related by *Fuller* in his life of *Sutcliffe*, that when on his death-bed and near the end of life, he frequently exclaimed—"Oh! that I had prayed more! If I had, I would have known more of the work of God in my own soul and in my family; I would have witnessed more the power of grace among my people, and I would have seen a great blessing on the church, and on labours for the world's conversion. Oh! that I had prayed more!"

### III.—PRAYERS OF PARENTS FOR THEIR CHILDREN, AND OF CHILDREN FOR PARENTS.

In the domestic constitution, next to the relation of husband and wife, that of the parent and child is the closest and most endearing and momentous. In the first stages of infancy and childhood, children are one with their parents, as, throughout life, they frequently display marked features of body and mutual likeness, and share an identity of interests. Parents live long after in their children. They, in many cases, transmit to posterity for generations the fundamental elements of character, as they influence to a large extent their future destiny. Parents, as the instruments of the existence of their children, are under the highest obligation to seek their happiness, by training them to fulfil the great end of their being—to glorify God, and to enjoy Him here and hereafter. They should ever regard them as the Lord's heritage, and as only entrusted to them to be trained to know and serve Him; and they should consider the happiness of their children equally with their own, as consisting in conformity

to the will of God, and in spiritual fellowship with Him.

Prayer for their children is the first and chief of all the duties of parents. It should be begun with the dawn of their existence, practised at every future stage, and be inseparably connected with the discharge of every other duty which the heads of families owe to their offspring. *Hannah*, the pious mother of Samuel, prayed for her child before his birth; and when he was ushered into the world, she received him as given of the Lord, and *lent* him to the Giver in an act of prayerful dedication. The simple records of humble parental piety bear testimony to many instances of like heartfelt prayer for children in the first stages of their earthly existence. The future piety of the offspring of godly parents, and their usefulness in the church, have been justly traced by themselves and others to their early dedication to God by devoted parents.\*

Special prayer for their children should be offered at their dedication to God, and introduction to the visible fellowship of the church in baptism. Children

\* The instances of the mothers of Timothy, of Augustine, of Chrysostom, of the martyr Renwick, and of many other distinguished servants of Christ, will ever stand prominent in the annals of the church. The author, while sensible that his position in the church is only humble and subordinate, may be allowed to mention an incident connected with his birth. His mother, who was characterised by an earnest, loving, truthful spirit, stated that a singularly godly woman who was present at the time in the chamber, took the infant up in her arms, and refused to give him back to his mother until she would promise in Divine strength that she would nurse him only for God. This, she said, she was enabled to do; and the fact of solemn surrender she employed is an affecting argument to constrain her child to youthful devotedness.

should have a chief place in the daily supplications at the throne of grace; and to give definiteness to their petitions, and to make a suitable impression on their own hearts of the importance of the service, and their awful responsibility in relation to their children, it may serve the best purpose to mention them individually by name in approaching the throne of grace on their behalf. Parents should pray much for the early conversion of their children; travailing as in birth till Christ be formed within them. They should ask the blessing from above upon all the religious instructions given them, whether by themselves or others. The fulfilment of the gracious promise—"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children," \* may only be expected as we commit them to the Great Teacher, and seek that the Spirit of truth would open their understandings, and take the things of Christ and show them unto them.

If parents would cultivate a prayerful spirit in relation to their families, they will often take advantage of particular events in domestic life, and set apart seasons for prayer on their behalf; such as on the return of the anniversaries of the birth of children, their entrance to school, deliverances wrought for them, and instances of goodness and mercy in providence shown them. A special part of the Sabbath services in the family should be particular prayer for children, both in their presence and in private. Instances are to be met with in the biographies of devoted servants of Christ, in which, in addition to daily prayers for their children, they have set apart days for private fasting and inter-

\* Isaiah liv. 13.

cession for them individually; and sometimes the record is found of the times in which they obtained the assurance that their prayers were answered by the bestowal of the desired blessing.

No duty enjoined in the word on parents can be properly performed without frequent, earnest prayer. If, like Hebrew parents, they are to teach them diligently about God's ways and works, they must do it prayerfully. To "train" children "in the way they should go," or, as it is in the original, "to lead them to the mouth of the way," they should early pray with them and for them. And there is no possible method of teaching them to fear the Lord, and of bringing them "up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," but by giving all instructions in the spirit of prayer, and by commending them to the Spirit to bless and render them effectual. The annals of the church, and the records of Christian biography, present numerous instances of the habitual prayers of godly parents for their children, and of these being followed by singular blessings. In ancient times, the prayers of Monica, the mother of *Augustine*; Noima, mother of *Gregory Nazianzen*; and of Anthusa, mother of *Chrysostom*, were not only heard in the conversion of their sons, but were the means, through their eminent usefulness, of unspeakable blessings to the church. *John Newton* relates that the prayers of his mother, who died when he was seven years of age, served to restrain him when in youth he was thoughtless and wandering, as they doubtless were owned of God for his conversion and future usefulness. *Cecil* testifies that when he was wild and irreligious, it was, in passing his mother's room late at night, and overhearing her fervently pleading for him, that he



was constrained to fall on his knees in prayer, and soon after to consecrate himself to the Lord's service. The excellent *Cotton Mather*, in his usual quaint and simple style, expresses his purpose as a Christian parent—"When the children are of a suitable age for it, I will sometimes have them with me alone, and converse with them about the state of their souls, and then pray with them, earnestly entreating that the Lord would bestow His grace upon them, and thus make them witnesses of the agony with which I am travailing to see the image of Christ formed in them." One of the resolutions of *Dr. Doddridge*, as recorded in his Journal, was—"As a father, it shall be my care to intercede for my children daily; to converse with them often upon some religious subject; to drop some short hints of the serious kind, when there is not room for large discourse; to pray sometimes with them separately; and to endeavour to bring them early to the communion of the church." How desirable it is that all Christian parents would imitate these examples! What a precious means of blessing would such habits be to families and to the church!

#### CHILDREN PRAYING FOR PARENTS.

As parents are under obligation always to pray for their children, so a chief way of children honouring their parents is that of giving them an interest in their prayers. Filial duties, to which is assigned the first place in those which are enjoined in the second table of the Decalogue, are performed by showing all love to the persons and reverence to the authority of godly parents—receiving their instructions, obeying their counsels, imitating their example, and walking in their steps. Whatever support and



comfort they may minister to them, whatever service they may do them, there can be none more valuable to parents than that of knowing that their children are prayerful, and that they have a special interest in their prayers. If the apostle of love could say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth,"\* so godly parents will realise elevating spiritual joy, which is their strength, when their children walk in Divine truth, which requires them to pray without ceasing, and which assures them of every blessing bestowed in answer to believing prayer. To such parents it is an unspeakable comfort that they are mentioned daily in the simple petitions of their children in early childhood; and at times they are made to feel that He who perfects praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, hears such prayers on their behalf, and thus amply requites them for all parental cares and anxieties. Still more, as children advance in life, and may be living apart from their parents, they can alleviate their sorrows, and minister to them support and comfort, by constant intercessions for them. And when under the infirmities of age and at death, there is no human help more sustaining and pleasing than that of children who were dedicated to God and trained for His service, praying with and for their parents. To the aged patriarch Jacob it was promised, as a special blessing for the closing scene of life, that his loved and long lost son Joseph would "put his hand upon thine eyes"†—probably to close them in death. When the venerable Naomi had the congratulations of the Israelitish women, the son given to Ruth, whom she had led to

\* 3 John 4.

† Genesis xlv. 4.

trust under Jehovah's wings, was promised to be "a restorer of her life, and a nourisher of her old age." \* Such should children, who have been led by parents into the way of truth, ever aim to be. There are few sights in this world of sin and trial more lovely than that of children requiting their parents by constant prayers for them, and by tendering to them the cordial sympathy and aid to which a prayerful spirit will impel them. And in the death-chamber and at a dying hour, it is a privilege and blessing, alike to a dying parent and to his children, to commit one another in prayer to the Father of spirits. When, after the parting scene, children who have thus ministered to their parents in life and death, take their place in the world, or at the heads of families of their own, they have all ground to expect the reward guaranteed in "the first commandment with promise"—length of days and prosperity, as far as for God's glory and their real and lasting benefit.

#### IV.—PRAYERS FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD.

Fervent prayer, individual and united, for the world's conversion should ever be a main part of the intercession of God's servants. Our Lord, in His model prayer which He taught His disciples, instructed them to pray specially and doubly for this great event—"THY KINGDOM COME." "THY WILL BE DONE, AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH." The spiritual illumination of the nations, and their professed subjection to Messiah, the Prince of the kings of the earth, are events of transcendent importance, embracing in their accomplishment all those objects

\* Ruth iv. 15.

which pertain to the fulfilment of the Divine purposes, and to the highest and best interests of humanity. They cannot therefore but be matter of earnest Christian desire, and of continual prayer to all God's people.

The world's conversion, we are taught in the Scriptures, will be effected through the means which God hath ordained, and which He will bring into general requisition and render effectual by the universal diffusion of the word of truth, the general faithful preaching of the gospel, and by the plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh. Towards effecting this grand consummation the church must be purged from error and corruption. She must become the instrument of her own enlargement, and be made the centre of light and living influence. From Jerusalem are to issue "living waters," which go forth in summer and winter to purify and fertilise the earth.\* The conversion of the world is not to be effected without a mighty and momentous change in the condition and character of the nations. Great national evils—ignorance, idolatry, oppression, injustice, and vice must be done away. Political constitutions shall be formed, and laws enacted and administered on the basis of Scriptural truth. Rulers must own subjection to Messiah the Prince, and be possessed of Scriptural qualifications. They must rule in righteousness, as "ministers of God to men for good." The sceptre of authority and the national resources must be consecrated to the reigning Mediator. "Nations shall be born in a day." "Righteousness and praise shall spring up before all nations." "The kingdoms of this world shall

\* Zech. xiv. 5.

become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.”  
 “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”\* “The whole earth shall be filled with His glory.”† These grand and wondrous events are frequently represented throughout the Scriptures as taking place in answer to intercessory prayer. The ancient church prayed for Messiah’s advent and the coming of His kingdom. It pleaded—“O that the salvation of Israel could come out of Zion.” “Send forth thy light and truth.” “Save us, O Lord, our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Thy holy name, and to triumph in Thy praise.”‡ With fervent importunity the Divine favour and blessing were sought for the church, as *means* for a greatly desired *end*. “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause Thy face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations.”§ This was conjoined with special prayer for the illumination and blessing of all people, and the prosperity of nations, rejoicing under the Divine government of truth and righteousness. ||

The numerous predictions and promises contained in the Old Testament concerning the deliverance and blessing of the nations were intended to be matters of prayer and expectation to believers before the Saviour’s advent in the flesh and the mission of the promised Comforter. The “economy of the last times” was introduced by the abundant effusion of “the spirit of grace and supplication;” and the immediate effect was *evangelistic power* for the awak-

\* Rev. xi. 15; Isa. xl. 5.      † Psalm lxxii. 19.

‡ Ps. cvi. 47.      § Ps. lxvii. 1, 2.      || Ps. lxvii. 3, 4.



ening of sinners, and the ingathering of great multitudes into the kingdom of Christ. As if this was designed to be the normal state of the church in all times future, and this the grand instrumentality for the world's conversion, great numbers of qualified agents for this work were called forth, and willingly consecrated themselves to make known God's salvation throughout the earth. The church's resources of every kind were fully dedicated to the service. The word of truth spread rapidly throughout the earth, and vast multitudes of various nationalities were rescued from darkness and vice, and turned from idols to serve the living and true God. Had the church in subsequent times cherished the same spirit, we cannot doubt that the gospel would have achieved continual and still more illustrious triumphs. Long ere now it would have been known, "for the obedience of faith among all nations." The idols would have been utterly abolished. The Deliverer would have gone out of Zion; all Israel would have been saved, the fulness of the Gentiles been gathered in, and "the middle wall of partition" removed; both would have appeared one in Christ, the glorious Head.

The era of the missionary enterprise and of the spread of the Bible has been distinguished in its beginning and progress by much intercessory prayer for the great objects contemplated, and for a blessing upon the means employed for its attainment. The *Moravian Missions* were commenced by humble men—the remnants of persecution and exiles from their native country, in the spirit of earnest prayer, as they have been carried forward in the most inhospitable regions in the same spirit; and to this they are chiefly indebted for their remarkable success. The



foundation of the *London Missionary Society* was laid in 1795 by a few Christian men, who had for some time been deeply impressed with a sense of their obligation to send the word of life to the perishing heathen, and who met in a private room for consultation and prayer. The great work carried on by the *American Board of Foreign Missions* originated from the resolution of a pious mother, and from a united prayer meeting of a few students. A boy overheard his mother say she had devoted him to the service of God as a missionary. After his conversion his thoughts were immediately turned toward missions to the heathen. He influenced a few fellow-students on the same subject, and they mutually agreed to hold a stated prayer meeting on the subject. Driven by an approaching thunder storm from the grove where the meeting had usually been held, they took shelter behind a haystack; and one of the number, *Samuel J. Mills*, proposed to send the gospel to the dark heathen land of Asia (India), and said "they could if they would." The matter was discussed; and then, as the storm was passing away, Mills said, "Come, let us make it a matter of prayer under this haystack, while the dark clouds are going and the clear sky is coming." So they prayed, and continued to consult together, through the following season. Then a society was formed, which was, in the language of its constitution, to effect in the persons of its members a mission to the heathen. This was the first Foreign Missionary Society formed on the American continent—the small germ out of which the mighty tree was reared that has spread far and wide its vigorous branches, and shot forth its verdant leaves "for the healing of the nations."

"CONCERTS" of united prayer for missions, that

are statedly observed in some countries, as in *America*, in *Basle*, and among the *Moravians*, have been productive of rich fruits, in leading some to dedicate themselves to the missionary enterprise, in encouraging labourers in the work amid difficulties and dangers, and promoting the success of missions among the heathen. To an increased spirit of prayer in the church in recent times may be ascribed more rapid progress in the work of the world's conversion, the opening of new doors of access to heathen lands, and the increased numbers of inquirers and converts. The prayer of the dying *Livingstone* for Africa, not less than his singularly self-denied, devoted life, has already received an answer in the several missions which have been originated to central Africa by the larger sections of the church, which, in their progress, will put an end to Africa's great curse—the slave trade, and open up that great continent to the civilising and saving influences of the gospel. The grand concern of those who seek the conversion of the world and of the whole church should be to excite, sustain, and extend the spirit of earnest, united, and importunate prayer for this great object. This should always be looked upon as the chief and most potent instrumentality for the work. Christians should be stirred up to pray for a blessing on the churches, that they be more earnestly concerned for advancing the Redeemer's glory, that they may be led to compassionate the perishing, and be characterised by enlarged liberality and devoted efforts for the salvation of sinners. They should "pray the Lord of the harvest" to prepare and send out labourers into His "plenteous harvest." They should seek the removal of mighty impediments that lie in the way of the world's conversion. Prayers

for nations and their rulers should be frequently offered, that national judgments should be overruled and sanctified, so as to forward the coming and establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom; and that national policy may be directed so as to discountenance and restrain idolatry and vice, and to promote the cause of truth and righteousness. Joint supplications should be presented, in terms of the Divine promises, that "kings may become nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers to the church;" and that "the honour and glory of the nations may be brought into her." \* The fulfilment of many "exceeding great and precious promises" concerning the universal diffusion and triumph of the gospel, and the subjection of all things throughout the earth to the enthroned Redeemer, is dependent on the prayers of God's believing people. Soon as the Spirit, descending from on high with power, impels them fervently, unitedly, preseveringly to ask, nothing doubting, the heathen will be given to the Son for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. † When, from every closet of private prayer, from every family altar, and from all the assemblies of the church, as with one voice, the petition will constantly be offered, "THY KINGDOM COME," then, from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, the Saviour's "name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to His name, and a pure offering." ‡ When prayer shall be made for Christ and His kingdom "continually," He "shall be praised daily." "His name shall be

\* Isaiah xlix. 23; Rev. xxi. 26.

† Psalm ii. 8.

‡ Malachi i. 11.

continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.\* Real, united, persevering prayer, offered by the whole church, will put in operation all the means for the world's conversion, will draw down upon them a rich and manifold blessing, and will hasten on the bright and blessed day when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." †

\* Psalm lxxii. 17.

† Habakkuk ii. 14.

## CHAPTER VII.

### CONNECTION BETWEEN BELIEVING PRAYER AND ANSWERS—CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER.

ANSWERS to prayer coming from God are presupposed in the nature of prayer, as well as in all the precepts of the word which enjoin it, and in the promises that are assured to its performance. If prayer, as it has been justly said, is natural to man, springing as it does from a sense of his dependence on God, it is equally natural to expect that desires and petitions addressed to One who is able and willing to help will be heard and answered by the needed help being granted to the suppliants.

In the plainest, most explicit, and most consoling terms, our blessed Saviour assured His disciples, in the days of His flesh, and through them assured all His people to the end of time, that believing prayer would be heard, and would receive a suitable answer. Thus repeatedly He declared—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."\* In His "last great discourse of consolation" He offers a double assurance of the success of prayers presented in His name—"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."† The statements of sacred Scripture, in relation to answers of prayer, are so uniform and full, and the

\* Matthew vii. 7.

† John xiv. 13, 14.



experience of God's people so constant and immutable, that there are none, in any age, who recognise the obligation to pray, and who betake themselves to the duty, that ever doubt that the blessings which they desire are to be obtained in answer to prayer. So much is this the case, that it has been judiciously said, that "the anticipation of an answer to our supplications is essential to all true prayer, and that we had better leave off praying, if we do not, at the time, entertain the expectation that our prayers will be heard and answered." \*

The grounds of looking up for answers of prayer are strongly presented and clearly exhibited through all parts of Divine revelation. The glorious Object of worship is entitled the "Hearer of Prayer," and this is stated as matter of the church's praise, and the encouragement for men of every class and in all ages to come to Him as suppliants. "Unto Thee shall all flesh come." † He is Jehovah, who "answereth by fire;" and thus He establishes His claim to be the true God, in opposition to all idols. When Elijah prayed at Carmel, he said—"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art Jehovah." ‡ God encourages His people to expect help and deliverance when they are sought in prayer. "He said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." § The command to pray implies that God will hear, and that there will not be disappointment in His denial of petitions. None are ever directed to pray as if it were doubtful that their

\* Dr. Owen.

† Ps. lxxv. 2.

‡ 1 Kings xviii. 36.

§ Isa. xlv. 19.

prayers would enter God's ears and be returned unanswered. The promises of gracious answers of prayer are many and very precious. They are given in the most absolute and emphatic manner. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."\* "Then shalt Thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here am I." "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him."† Sometimes the command enjoining the duty is enforced by the promise of an answer—"Call unto me, and I will answer thee." "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."‡ To show that He is ready to hear the desires of His people, and to grant their suits, He is represented as anticipating prayer with an answer. He is beforehand with them in granting their desires. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."§ The love of the Father, the office and work of the Son, and the indwelling and operation of the Holy Spirit, guarantee the certain answers of believing prayers. Thus the Saviour declares of the Father—"At that day ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me."|| The Redeemer's work in heaven, as the great High Priest of His people's profession, is to make continual intercession for them, by presenting their prayers, perfuming them with the

\* Luke xi. 13.      † Isaiah lviii. 9.      ‡ Psalm xci. 15.

§ Isaiah lxxv. 24; v. 14, 15.      || John xvi. 26, 27.

incense of His mediation, and procuring for them answers of good. The Holy Spirit helps their infirmities, by making intercession within them;\* and He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth the mind of the Spirit, and regards unutterable groanings as accepted prayers that are abundantly answered.

The experience and trust of God's servants, in all ages, have borne the amplest testimony that answers *are* given to their prayers. Thus David, in the Psalms, speaks in the name of the universal church and of every praying individual—"In Thee, O Lord, do I hope; Thou wilt hear,"—or answer. "It is surely good for me to draw near to God."† Isaiah, on this ground, encourages the church in trial to expect deliverance. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him. For He will be very gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee."‡

The Scriptures are everywhere full of the record of prayer heard and answered, and that not unfrequently in a sudden and remarkable manner. Jacob wrestled in prayer with the angel, and prevailed, and obtained the blessing. Moses interceded for Israel, and the Lord reversed His threatening, and turned away His anger. Samuel cried to the Lord for the people, and He heard and answered Him.§ David, Elijah, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Daniel, and many other Old Testament saints, knew God as the hearer of prayer, and received remarkable answers for themselves and others. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, the planting and

\* Rom. viii. 26, 27. † Ps. xxxviii. 15; lxxiii. 28.

‡ Isaiah xxx. 18, 19.

§ Gen. xxxii. 24-30; Exod. xxxiii. 12-15; 1 Sam. vii. 9.

spread of the church in primitive times, and the ingathering of Jews and Gentiles to its fellowship and privileges, are traced in the apostolic writings to the spirit of grace and supplication copiously poured out, and the prayers alike of apostles, ministers, and people abundantly answered. The united testimony of true servants of God in all time past has ever been—"Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble. Thou wilt prepare their heart. Thou shalt cause thine ear to hear."\* And this shall be His memorial throughout all coming generations—"The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desires of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them."†

In considering the subject of God's answering prayer, we should assume as fundamental His ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY. Though in wondrous condescension He hears the supplications of His people, He doeth according to His pleasure in heaven and earth. At times He appears to act contrary to the desires of His people, and to deny their requests, that they may know that He is God, and may serve Him with reverence and godly fear. While His revealed will and command are the rule of our prayers, He answers them according to His everlasting purpose. When the Saviour prayed most earnestly in His soul-agony, He said—"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."‡ We should learn from this all-perfect example, as the only right spirit to be cherished in prayer, entire submission to the Divine will. If, when we pray, a particular request

\* Ps. x. 17.

† Psalm cxlv. 18.

‡ Luke xxii. 42.



is denied, we should submit, on the ground that it is not accordant with the purpose of Him who is infinitely wise and good. When our prayers, in their matter and manner, are in accord with His revealed law, and are offered through the Mediator, they are accepted, even though a particular petition be not granted. Prayer is ever to be regarded as a means of grace and blessing, like the preaching of the gospel and the dispensation of other religious ordinances. Even when these are administered by approved servants, and in a manner pleasing to God, they may not be followed by the desired fruits. They “become a savour of death unto death unto some, even when they are unto God a sweet savour through Christ.”\* While we should always engage in prayer for ourselves and others, as a main duty and a means of spiritual blessing, we should regard the blessing as coming from God alone, and should leave it to His infinite wisdom to withhold or give it, at what time or in what manner seems good unto Him.

Denials of requests for particular benefits, or delays in granting them, are not inconsistent with God hearing and answering prayer. He may deny a particular request because it would not be for His own glory and His servant's good to grant it. Just as a wise-kind parent may withhold from his child that he loves what he knows would be injurious to him, however eagerly desired. The request may be denied, and a higher and better benefit bestowed in its place, as when the Apostle Paul earnestly sought that “the thorn in the flesh” might be taken away from him, when, instead, the large assurance was

\* 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.



given Him, fitted for all times and circumstances of labour and trial—"My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."\* Delays in answering prayer are ordered often for singular and important benefits to God's saints. They serve to reprove the undevout hurry and impatience to which believers themselves are liable. They try faith, teach patience, awaken to more earnest petitions, and confirm the habit of prayer. They tend powerfully to enhance the value of the mercy when it comes, and to bring a greater revenue of glory and praise to God for all His benefits. *Augustine's* mother wrestled in prayer for upwards of nine years before he became the subject of converting grace. She doubtless saw, in his high spiritual attainments and eminent usefulness, reasons of rejoicing that her first earnest prayers were not all at once answered. The plentiful showers of grace that descended on the apostolic churches were the rich fruits of obedience to the inspired direction to "pray without ceasing," to "continue instant in prayer," and to "watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." And when the fulness of the blessing promised to the church and to the world at the Millennium will be enjoyed, it will be the precious return of the many prayers of the witnessing church of Christ and of suffering saints, that have lain before the mercy-seat, never unheeded and disregarded though long unanswered. The language of God's faithful church, in different periods of her eventful history, has often been—"How long wilt Thou forget me, Lord?" True servants of Christ, like *Calvin*, in times of affliction and distress of spirit,

\* 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

have been found to cry out—"Lord, how long?" Yet, with these inward groanings, there has come in answer to prayer gracious support under suffering; and the ultimate deliverance has been more sweet and satisfactory through the sharpness of the trial and the lengthened delay of necessary relief.

Answers of prayer are always to be looked for, and there are evidences sufficiently clear and marked of their being given. We can only pray aright and show that we value properly the blessing sought in prayer, when we earnestly desire an answer for good, as, if we receive, this will become the strongest incitement to thanksgiving, renewed earnestness in prayer, and devoted obedience. An answer of prayer from God may be known in various ways. It has been quaintly said, that betimes "*the answer speaks for itself*," as when the deliverance or mercy sought is soon given. Again, though the outward benefit desired is not granted, prayer is answered when grace to support and comfort is imparted, and the effects of the Spirit's gracious operation are consciously felt in the heart. The answer may be on its way when yet it is not fully come, and of this the suppliant may be made sensible. This may be known by inward peace communicated by the promise applied and cleared, by the suppliant being enabled to appropriate God in His covenant relations, and being brought to acquiesce in the Divine procedure—to patient waiting on God, and to perseverance in prayer amidst discouragements.

As an objection against expecting *special answers* of prayer, it has been maintained that it is vain to expect to receive the material blessing for which one asks—"all the benefit to be looked for is *subjective*, in bringing the heart into a better condition." The

reflex influence of prayer is thus represented as the only good result to the petitioner. The chief object of prayer, it is alleged, is not to induce God to grant what the suppliant asks, but to bring his own mind to a due state of humility, and submission, and peace. It is easy, however, to show that in all cases when subjective benefits are derived from acts of prayer, they are only found in connection with the belief in its objective power. Persons will not continue to pray if they are brought to believe that they will not receive what they ask. Those who manifest a truly prayerful spirit, and give evidence that their moral character is elevated by coming to the mercy-seat, are, without exception, firm believers in the doctrine that God is the "hearer of prayer," and that prayer is the ordained means of obtaining from Him the blessings which they need.

The objection which modern scientists urge against the expectation of prayer being answered, so as to affect material changes, as the arresting of disease, deliverance from danger and death, influencing the state of the weather, victories in war, and the removal of famines, pestilence, and other epidemics, is taken from the observed uniformity in the operation of natural laws. *Tyndale*, a distinguished leader of such scientists, says—"Science does assert that without a disturbance of natural law, quite as serious as the stoppage of an eclipse, or the rolling of the Saint Lawrence up the falls of Niagara, no act of humiliation, individual or national, could call one shower from heaven, or deflect towards us a single beam of the sun." Another of the same school declares—"Those who believe that the miraculous is still active in nature, may, with perfect consistency, join in our periodic prayers for fair weather and for

rain, while those who hold that the age of miracles is past, will refuse to join in such petitions." While it is fully admitted that faith in the constancy of the operation of natural laws is indispensable to intellectual vigour and to moral training, the laws of nature, as these scientists allege, are neither mere blind force nor unintelligent causes. They are, on the other hand, expressions of the will of a supreme personal intelligence. They are His modes of His working in the government of the universe. Admit the doctrine of a personal God as the supreme moral governor of the world, then He can, through the ordinary operation of fixed laws which He has ordained, meet all the cases of His creatures who call upon Him, as He can suspend the operation of any of His physical laws for the accomplishment of a higher moral purpose. In special instances He may vary His action, when a sufficient reason for doing so presents itself. Man, possessed of intelligence and will, can, through scientific skill, availing himself of fixed physical laws, suspend or vary their ordinary operation to effect a desired object. He can, likewise, within certain limits, employ the laws of nature in granting the requests of a friend. Surely much more may the Highest Intelligence—the sovereign, supreme will, to whom all things throughout the universe are subservient—employ these laws in answering His people's prayers. As He ever works for the accomplishment of His purposes by means, He may, and doubtless did, in forming the scheme of the universe from the beginning, appoint prayer as an indispensable means for the conferring of certain benefits. Besides, God is revealed to us as "the Father of the spirits of all flesh," as well as



the lawgiver and moral governor. This relation He could not sustain to His rational creatures if He did not hear their cries of distress, supply their wants, and in answer to the voice of their prayers bestow on them whatever they seek, in a way befitting His paternal character and their filial relation. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." \*

It is only required, further, that we notice briefly THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESSFUL PRAYER, or the GROUNDS on which we are warranted to expect that our prayers will be graciously answered. These are stated with much fulness in many places in the Scriptures, and illustrative examples are given which show the application of the principles stated.

First of all, *the character of the suppliant* is represented as being closely connected with the success of his supplications. If any iniquity is regarded in the heart, the Lord will not hear and accept prayer. † The "prayer of the wicked is an abomination." "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." ‡ God may, and sometimes does, give the matter desired, when it is sought by an evil heart and for a sinful end. To Israel He gave the flesh for which they lusted, but "sent leanness to their souls." If we would succeed in prayer, we must "lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." § The promise that the desire of our hearts shall be given is connected with obedience to the command—"and delight thyself also in the Lord." || The desires that are inseparable from a holy character are those alone that are

\* Psalm ciii. 13.      † Psalm lxvi. 18.      ‡ James iv. 3.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

|| Psalm xxxvii. 4.



said to be fulfilled in gracious answers of prayer. As implanted and excited by the Spirit, these are pure, humble, importunate, and absorbing—refusing to be appeased till the objects on which they are fixed are obtained. These spiritual desires are pictured in the most plain and explicit terms in the Scripture—as *asking, seeking, knocking, continuing* instant in prayer, coveting; the soul thirsting as dry land, and breaking, through sustained, intense longing. Not the languid, lifeless prayer of the sluggard, nor the formal temporary petitions of the hypocrite are granted, but wrestling like that of Jacob, continued throughout the night, and brooking no denial; or the pressing importunity of the Caananitish woman, employing apparent delays and refusals as arguments to press her suit, exhibit the nature and expression of those soul-longings which shall be filled abundantly. Such desires indicate the concentration of all the powers of the soul, and form its highest exercise, so that when they are met by gracious answers from the throne, they realise the most valued blessings. Judiciously did *Coleridge* remark, some time before his death—"To pray with all the heart and strength, with the reason and the will, to believe vividly that God will listen to the voice through Christ, and verily do the thing that pleaseth Him at last—this is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian warfare on earth: Teach us to pray, Lord."

2. Prayer, to be accepted, must be presented *in faith*. The suppliant embraces the promise, and confides in the power, grace, and faithfulness of God to fulfil it. Coming to God, he "must believe that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek

Him." \* The Saviour makes faith the indispensable qualification for receiving—"Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." † Love to Christ is joined to faith in His mission; and when, in the exercise of these graces, the petitioner asks in Christ's name, he is assured of the Father's love, and of His readiness to grant his petitions. ‡ As faith rests in God believing the promise, it leads to importunity, and anticipates an answer for good, notwithstanding delays and discouragements. The Saviour's promise connects spiritual character with the fullest answer to believing prayer. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." § How clear and marked are the features of Christian character here sketched! Abiding in Christ by vital union, and the exercise of faith and love, and the words of Christ abiding richly within, thus alone may we expect that our prayers will be heard on high, and bring to us plentiful returns of blessing. Those who are distinguished in Scripture for receiving remarkable answers of prayer are recorded as possessing eminent graces. Abraham walked by faith, and was the "friend of God." Noah, by faith, "condemned the world," and "did according to all that the Lord commanded him." Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," received a Divine revelation in answer to prayer. And Paul, who prayed without ceasing for all the churches, and whose prayers drew down upon them showers of blessing, accounted all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ

\* Heb. xi. 6.

† Mark xi. 24.

‡ John xvi. 26, 27.

§ John xv. 7.

Jesus; and lived His life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him.\* If we would be gladdened with joyful answers of prayer, we must, by the exercise of the Spirit's grace in all holy living, follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

3. Again, we may only look for an answer for good when that which we ask is *in accordance with the will of God*. He gives and withholds according to *His own purpose and prerogative*. Of ourselves, we are ignorant and short-sighted, and we know not what we should pray for as we ought, even in relation to things of our present temporal condition. In our weakness and selfishness, like impatient children, we are prone to ask what would be hurtful for us; as when we seek health, and if it were given, we would feel less our dependence upon God; and if we were granted prosperity, we would become full and forget Him. Justly has the poet of nature said—

“ We, ignorant of ourselves,  
Beg often our own harm, which the wise Powers  
Deny us for our good: so find we profit  
By losing of our prayers.” †

As a wise, loving, earthly father keeps at times from his children what he knows would be injurious to them, however eagerly or importunately they may desire it, so our heavenly Father, whose will is ever all-wise, and just, and kind, consults His people's good at times in refusing equally as in granting their petitions. Thus have they reason in all things to say, as did the Saviour in His agony—“ Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” and to be as

\* Phil. iii. 8; Gal. ii. 20.

† Shakspeare.

thankful that things which they eagerly sought were denied them as when their requests were fully granted.

The purpose and prerogative of God, as the "hearer of prayer," are to be viewed *in connection with His character as the moral Governor of universe*. His giving or refusing answers to His people's prayers is a part of the moral discipline which is designed for them—an essential element of the training which is to mature their character and perfect them in holiness. God may give what they ask to convince them of their folly, and He may deny it to lead them to value higher blessings. And His treatment of their petition, whether in the way of granting or refusing the request, may influence others in the way of encouragement or reproof, or instruction in righteousness. The passionate prayers of Israel in the wilderness were, at times, granted as a judgment upon their murmuring and rebellion, and again denied that they might be taught to value covenant privileges, and walk in holy obedience. Moses' eager desire to enter Canaan was met by God saying—"Let it suffice thee; speak no more to me of this matter" \*—to teach impressively to all the people how fearful a provocation is always the sin of a chosen servant of God. The denial of Paul's thrice-repeated petition for the removal of the "thorn in the flesh," was designed for the increase of his spiritual strength, though his body was not relieved; and the gracious assurance given was intended for the benefit of believers throughout all succeeding ages. Promises to God's servants of answers of prayer, so large and abundant, are to be

\* Deut. iii. 26.



understood in accordance with the wisdom and love of Him who gives them. They will be fulfilled in pursuance of His fixed purpose, and so as to secure the highest good of them that fear Him. His grand end in the government of the universe is to advance His own glory, in promoting the interests of the gospel, the good of the church, and the sanctification and final salvation of His redeemed people. When in a right frame of spirit, these are the chief ends which they aim after in all their efforts and prayers. God's hearing their prayers is only a foreordained means to such ends. Whether therefore the petitions of believers are heard or denied, they have all reason to acquiesce in the Divine will. In the fullest and best sense—abiding in Christ and delighting themselves in God—what they will is given them, and they obtain the desires of their hearts.

From such views of the pre-requisites of successful prayer, a principal inference is that *the existence and increase of holiness in the suppliant is chiefly regarded*. It is ever true that “the effectual inwrought prayer of a righteous man”—whether for himself or for others—“availeth much.”\* True holiness involves the indwelling of the Spirit, and the entire consecration to God of the whole heart and life. It invariably combines *praying and working*. The asking of such men is that of those who live for God, do much for the glory of His name, and habitually illustrate in their lives the power of the gospel. Those, as taught by the word and Spirit, use all appointed means to attain the objects of their prayers, whether for themselves or others. They look for success only in connection with diligence in duty and growth in

\* James v. 16.



grace ; and their great end in seeking success is not for its own sake, but that God, from whom it comes, may have all the glory. Thus, while answers of prayer are only to be expected in association with a holy character, the reception and recognition of them become an eminent incentive and encouragement to the cultivation of universal holiness. In as far as individuals shine in the beauty of holiness, their prayers are heard and answered with blessing ; and according as "Holiness to the Lord" is inscribed upon communities, civil and ecclesiastical, and their relations and works, will deliverances be wrought for them, corruptions purged out, and manifold blessings enjoyed.

Hence, too, it is apparent that the success of prayer cannot be judged by a *mere human test*, or by the giving or withholding of a material benefit. When it is proposed, for instance, by scientists that the efficacy of prayer should be tested by trying it on the inmates of different wards of an hospital, the recovery of those in one ward being sought as a special object of prayer, and those in another being left to the operation of medical applications without prayer ; it is sufficient to say about this proposal that those who make it betray alike their ignorance of true science and of any acquaintance with the nature of true prayer. Prayer lies in the plan of moral and spiritual things ; and it is therefore unscientific to require that it should be tried by a mere physical test. The answer of prayer depends greatly on the character of the suppliant ; and without acquaintance with the state of the heart this cannot be determined. Then the results of the answer upon the suppliant himself and upon others are to be taken into account, and these lie wholly

beyond the province of science, and are only known to Him who knows the end from the beginning. Appropriately has it been remarked—"No mere human test can distinguish a true prayer from a false one; and if it cannot judge of the cry which comes out of the lips of a man, how can it realise the answer which comes out of the heart of God?"\* In an hospital a human physician treats patients very differently, according to their diseases, temperament, constitution, and history. To one he gives what he requests, and denies the same thing to another, and this he does from considerations that lie beyond their knowledge and comprehension. It is the benefit of the patient, or the effectual healing of the disease, which he keeps steadily in view, and not their requests. If God much more in all things consults His own glory and His people's spiritual good, who shall limit Him in His providence beyond a human physician? What human test can properly take cognisance of what is known only to His all-wise and far-reaching purposes?

Finally, in the whole matter of expecting answers of prayer the chief and grand concern should *be entire subjection to the will of God*. When we have thoroughly learned to say in heart, in all our supplications, "Thy will be done," and to leave our requests unreserved in His hands, to be disposed of according to His good pleasure, we may be assured that they will always be answered in such a way as will result in our ultimate benefit and blessing, whatever trials or delays may be allotted to us in the immediate future. The words of *Leighton*, when speaking on this subject, are full of emphatic meaning and strong consolation

\* Dr. W. M. Taylor, in *Princeton Review*, January, 1879, p. 190.

— “True prayers never come weeping home.” Again, “This is the excellent advantage of the prayer of faith, that it quiets and establishes the heart in God. Whatsoever be its estate and desire, when once he hath put his petition into God’s hand, he rests content in holy serenity and assurance concerning the answer, refers it to the wisdom and love of God, how and when He will answer, not doubting that whatsoever it be and whensoever, it shall both be gracious and seasonable. But the reason why so few of us find that sweetness and comfort that is in prayer is because the true nature and use of it are so little known.”

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ABOUT NOTING PETITIONS AND LOOKING FOR ANSWERS—  
“RECORDING PRAYER.”

GEORGE MÜLLER says—“I would particularly advise all, especially the younger believers, to use a little book in which they may note down on the one side the requests which they bring before God. There are certain matters which God has laid on our hearts, and we should note them down. It would be helpful to us to write, ‘at such and such a time I began to pray with regard to this matter!’ If we do so, we shall find that sooner or later the prayer will be answered. Then let us mark on the opposite side, that it has at such a time pleased God to answer that prayer. After some time read over the memorandum book, and you will find how, again and again, it has pleased God to answer your prayers, and perhaps regarding matters which you little expected the answer to come; and soon you will find the wondrous effect of this on your heart, in increasing your love and gratitude to our heavenly Father. The more careful you are in marking what you ask and what God has given, the more distinctly you will be able to trace how, again and again, it pleased God to answer your prayers, and the more you will be drawn out to God to love and gratitude; you will find precisely as the Psalmist found it, when he says—‘I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications.’”—(Psalm cxvi. 1).

## CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUNDING PRAYER THE GREAT PRESENT WANT OF  
THE CHURCH—THE PRIVILEGE AND BENEFIT—THE  
MEANS OF FUTURE BLESSING.

PRAYER, the soul's converse with God, is a privilege the most exalted and honoured. By it we are led into the audience-chamber of the palace of the King of Heaven; we minister at the throne, where the seraphim worship with profound reverence and humility, where the effulgent glory of Godhead beams forth, and where issue continually bright displays of Divine power and goodness, transcending the highest expectations of suppliants.

In the most wonderful manner God has condescended not only to reveal this privilege as provided for weak, dependent, sinful creatures; but to hold it out to them in free repeated offers, and to press it with all urgency upon their acceptance. The way of access to the mercy-seat stands open by day and night; and the humblest believer amidst the labours, wants, and distracting cares, temptations and conflicts of this present life, is fully assured of a welcome in coming by it, and of receiving support, deliverance, comfort, and all needed seasonable supplies.

It can never be too seriously considered and firmly believed that prayer is the chief ordained means of blessing, whether to individuals or to communities, domestic, civil, or ecclesiastical. If from any of these the blessing is withholden, or given only in



limited or partial measure, the reason is found in the Divine declaration—“*Ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.*”\* In relation to the church especially the necessity and importance of prayer as the way of blessing for herself, and to render her the instrument of extensive blessing to the world, cannot be over-estimated. Declension in a profession, the want of efficacy in the word and ordinances, divisions and corruptions in practice, have ever been found in connection with neglect or formality in prayer. All seasons of revival and increase in the church, on the other hand, have been uniformly preceded and accompanied by powerful manifestations of the “spirit of grace and supplications.” It is noteworthy that the memorable deliverances which have been wrought in different ages for God’s people are recorded chiefly as monuments of success in prayer. Such were the salvation of Israel at the Red Sea, the victory over Amalek at Rephidim, the discomfiture of the Philistines in the days of Samuel; the Ebenezer then erected was less a monument of victory over powerful enemies than of the prophet’s victorious prayer.† The peculiar name of honour of God’s people—Israel, will ever be the perpetual memorial of wrestling prayer, in which the believing suppliant has power with God and with man, and prevails.‡ And the wonders of Divine power at Pentecost ushering in the gospel economy, will attest to the end of time, in all places, that the normal condition of the church, and the certain way of richest blessings, are the

\* James iv. 2, 3.

† Exodus xiv. 15; xvii. 12; 1 Sam. vii. 5, 9, 12; xii. 18.

‡ Genesis xxxii. 28.



copious effusion of the Spirit sent in answer to effectual, fervent, persevering prayer.

Considering the province which is uniformly assigned to prayer throughout the Bible, and the present observable condition and future prospects of the church, we may be fully persuaded that abounding prayer is, in reality, the principal requirement of the church in our day—without which other means are of little or no avail—the plentiful supply of which cannot fail to minister benefits innumerable and of unspeakable value. The church, designed by her glorious Founder to be “the light of the world” and “the perfection of beauty,” to be the centre and grand instrument of illumination and manifold blessing to the world, appears to a sad extent deficient in these characteristics, and unfit to realise this high end. She has not arisen to her proper attitude, as if her light were come, nor equipped herself for her important mission, as the bringer of the good tidings of light and salvation to a perishing world. Her unity is rent by countless divisions. Her testimony for truth is nullified by errors and corruptions in doctrine, worship, and administration. She has been degraded by mingling with corrupt political systems and worldly customs and ways, instead of acting as a superior power, always to stand apart from them, to mould and influence them for good. Spiritual power with the word and ordinances, for the conversion of sinners and the edification and comfort of believers is, in a great measure, wanting. The means, both with respect to living agents and pecuniary offerings, are scantily furnished for bringing the nations to the knowledge of revealed truth, and for subduing the world to Christ. Great systems of error, delusion, and idolatry—such as

Popery, Mohammedanism, and Paganism—are yet towering in unbroken strength; and instead of yielding to the light of advancing science or of Divine truth, are threatening the church's bulwarks, and even to reclaim territories which appeared to have been won from spiritual darkness. Instead of going forth everywhere as a covenanted, conquering host, the church of Christ presents, to a sad extent, the melancholy appearance of "a lodge in a garden of cucumbers; as a besieged city."

What will rescue the church from this state of declension and spiritual weakness, restore her to renewed life and joy, and make her a blessing in the earth? Only the Spirit of light and life poured out, leading to universal, persevering prayer and supplication. This shed down abundantly will—

1. Effectually *remedy the numerous evils* which now exist in the church. The spirit of prayer poured out will awaken from lukewarmness, formality, and worldliness. It will heal divisions, recover from defection and apostacy, restore "first love," and excite to do "first works." Instead of decay and death, there shall be in connection with the church's fervent, wrestling prayer, the freshness and vigour of renewed spiritual life. The dense clouds of error and sin will be scattered by the beams of the Son of righteousness. Glowing, unfeigned love of the brethren will displace all coldness and alienation of affection. Fervent zeal will expel all lukewarmness and formality; and the realising sense of things unseen and eternal, which true faith and communion with God impart, will produce non-conformity to the world, and produce transformation "according to the renewing of the mind." The great means for overcoming and removing the evils

that afflict the church and prevent her usefulness and efficiency, is prayer, and to this all, whether individuals or in social and public fellowship, should betake themselves, in order to obtain deliverance and enlargement.

2. The *reflex* benefits of prayer to those who rightly engage in it are manifold and precious. We cannot draw near to God without experiencing that it is surely good to do so. True faith, of which prayer is the suitable exponent and expression, works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Peace flows into the soul when we disburden our cares to God, the hearer of prayer, and pour out our hearts before Him. Humility, meekness, patience, as they are called into exercise, refine and expand the soul. And as we lay hold on Divine promises, and plead them at the mercy-seat, we are made to cherish assurances of gracious support and deliverance and blessing, far above all the material treasures of the universe. In the audience-chamber, to which the king brings us, we delight ourselves in God as our inheritance and covenant-portion. Prayer has been appropriately said to be "a golden key" which opens the door to treasures beyond all estimate. It is like "a golden chain let down from heaven," to draw up thither our hearts, that we may bring down countless riches of grace and blessing to ourselves, to the church, and to perishing millions in the world. When prayer becomes our vital element, and we learn, as taught by the Spirit, "in all things, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known to God, with thanksgiving," then "the peace that passeth understanding will keep our hearts and minds." \*

\* Philippians iv. 6.

more and more to the glorious Being with whom we are brought into near and habitual intercourse, and our characters refined and ennobled, we shall realise the dignity and blessedness of the sons of God—heirs of the promise of life and of glory. Like Moses, as he came down from the mount of lofty privilege, when we come forth from the presence-chamber, our faces shine, reflecting the glory of the august Personage with whom we have familiarly conversed. An early Christian father—the eloquent *Chrysostom*—thus states the reflex benefits of prayer—“No sooner does a man lift up his hands to heaven and call upon God, than he is snatched from this world, and translated into the other, if he pray with care and diligence; so that if anger boil in him it is presently quieted; if envy grow it is easily expelled; if lust burn it is quenched. For, as the Psalmist observes, that when the sun rises, all the beasts of the forest, which in the night had crept forth, lay themselves down in their dens; so, when prayers go forth out of our mouth, the mind is enlightened with a certain beam of light, and all unreasonable and brutish passions steal away and dare not appear. Nay, if the devil himself were there, he is driven away; if a demon, he departs; provided we pray with attentive and waking minds.”

3. Prayer is the appointed way of *obtaining instruments* for Christ's work, and of *bringing the blessing from above* upon their labours. When, by many remarkable movements in providence, the way is opening for the diffusion of the gospel throughout the nations—when great systems of idolatry and error and oppression are tottering to their fall, and men in many lands have become sensible of their degraded condition, and are longing for deliverance—



the greatest want is that of instruments, sufficient in numbers and adequately qualified, to go forth into all the world to proclaim salvation to the perishing, and to "turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." As men cannot be saved except they believe, and faith flows from hearing and the sending forth of preachers, so the church—God's ordained instrument for enlightening and saving the world—is under paramount obligation to select and commission men to preach the gospel to every creature. The supply must be commensurate, on the one hand, with the church's principles and obligations; and, on the other, with the work to be accomplished. Whether by ministers fully qualified by literary and theological training to expound the Scriptures and defend the truth, and to contend successfully against ancient and powerful systems of error and delusion, or by a numerous subordinate agency of devoted workers, the church needs to send forth many thousands of labourers, wherever doors of access are opened to Jews or Gentiles—in Pagan, Mohammedan, and Antichristian lands, and to the sadly neglected masses of "Home-heathen" in Protestant countries. The church, instinct with love to Christ, and realising her great mission to make known His salvation throughout all the earth, must be ready to make costly sacrifices for this object—to consecrate her loved sons and highest talents to the work, and to part willingly with her best men for the service. As yet there has hardly been any proper realisation of the obligation of this important duty in any part of the church. While a supply of candidates for the ministry in the home field is of late years furnished with difficulty, there is nothing like a sufficiency of labourers furnished for conduct-



ing the work of mission fields already opened, or for entering into the numerous territories of heathendom that in recent years are whitening for the spiritual harvest. How is the church to be aroused and quickened from criminal insensibility on this all-important subject? How will Christians be brought to see it to be their highest duty to yield their loved children to so honourable a service; and the baptized educated youth of the church to consecrate their lives to the work of establishing the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth? The one answer to these weighty inquiries is by the spirit of earnest, heartfelt, wrestling prayer abundantly poured out. Soon as the whole church, ministers and people, shall with one voice and heart pray the Lord of the harvest to *thrust out* labourers into His plenteous harvest, multitudes will be found ready to say, in cheerful self-surrender—"Here are we, send us." When, from all family altars the daily petition is presented, "Thy kingdom come," with heartfelt sincerity parents will account it their highest privilege to surrender their children for this noble work. And the young, impressed with a sense of baptismal engagement to be the Lord's, and endued with the spirit of prayer, will be eager to enlist under the Captain of Salvation, to achieve new victories for His cause, and to bring the world into willing subjection to His sceptre of power. As in the brief interval between the Saviour's ascension to heaven and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles, with the company of the disciples and the women, assembled together daily, in continued pleading and waiting, until the promised blessing in its fulness came, and the great work of the world's conversion was entered upon with mighty power, so

the church at present should regard it as her special call and most important duty to assume the like attitude of earnest, importunate supplication and eager expectation, until the Spirit be poured out from on high, and till multitudes of devoted instruments, responding to the command of the ascended Saviour, and the loud cry of perishing millions, shall consecrate themselves to a work the most estimable and ennobling in the earth.

It is, moreover, *through much prayer* that *the blessing will come upon all the church's work*. By prayer we take hold on the hand that moves the heavens. As in ancient times, when God's people called upon Him, He made bare His arm of power and came speedily for their deliverance, great mountains became a plain, and strong and numerous enemies were discomfited by a feeble band. Worm Jacob arose and was made a sharp thrashing instrument to thrash the mountains, and reduced them to powder for the wind to sweep them away; so will it yet be, in the day of the promised outpouring of the Spirit. The word, accompanied by fervent prayer, however weak the instrument who proclaims it, becomes "the rod of Divine power," to convince the impenitent, quicken the dead, and bring men to God—"a willing people." Ordinances, when prayerfully dispensed, are the vehicles of life-giving influence, and from them is drawn living, refreshing water as from "wells of salvation." In Pentecostal times, when assembled believers prayed, the place "was shaken where they were met together," and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness." \* So yet, through abounding prayer,

\* Acts iv. 31.

will the presence of the Spirit be realised in the assemblies of the church, "a door of utterance" will be given to ministers, and all who associate together for Christian fellowship will be enabled to speak the word with enlargement for conviction, edification, and comfort.

This especially is the *secret of all success in the church's work for spreading abroad the Redeemer's renowned fame and for the world's conversion*. Without much prayer all efforts for these ends must ever prove vain and fruitless. God alone can do the work, and His must ever be the exclusive and undivided glory. Prayer is the direct recognition of His immediate agency and paramount claims. By it all obstacles are cast out, "the door of faith is opened" to men idolatrous, impenitent, and degraded, believers are sustained and comforted, and their work prospered and blessed. The hearts of men of every class are opened to attend to the things spoken, multitudes called and converted fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows. The word of the Lord has free course and is glorified. The "precious seed" sown in tears yields a rich and wide-spread harvest. The "handful of corn" on mountain tops shakes with plentiful mellow fruit, like the trees of Lebanon; and "they of the city flourish like the grass of the field." Toward such abundant success long promised, prayer is every thing; and therefore it behoves God's servants to stir up one another and the whole church to earnest, united, constant wrestling prayer and supplication.

FUTURE BLESSINGS PROMISED—FUTURE ACHIEVEMENTS  
OF PRAYER.

Almost all Christians who have paid any attention

to the accounts given in the Bible or in the uninspired annals of the church, or who have considered the glorious delineations of sacred prediction of future times of reviving and refreshing from the presence of the Lord, profess to desire eagerly the coming of such a season. They speak of it with apparent deep interest, and give it a place in their prayers, private and public. Still, it is sadly apparent that, on various grounds, the prayers offered for this object are not such as the Lord requires, or such as may be expected to be followed with the wished for blessings. We are certainly and repeatedly assured in the Word, that large and manifold benefits will be bestowed when they are sought in earnest, persevering prayer. If these are withheld, is there not cause to infer that they have not been valued aright, and that suitable prayer has not been offered for their enjoyment? “*We have not, because we ask not.*” At times we may justly stand *in doubt of the sincerity of our prayers*, as we should always make a close inspection whether they have been offered with the heart, what are the principles which actuate them, and the ends which we aim at in seeking an answer. If we seek that our children should be saved, do we really desire above all that they be converted, that they live separate from the spirit, customs, and fashions of an evil world, and that they be distinguished above others by godly and useful lives? When we profess to desire revival in the church that will affect and bless ourselves and others, this must mean that we will live lives of faith—that all strife and alienations and evil speaking shall cease, that brotherly love and benevolence to all men will abound, that constant delight will be found in Divine ordinances and in



the ways of holy obedience, that enlarged liberality will become general among Christians; that all will be done for the glory of God, for the conversion of the world to Christ, and that Christians, living habitually as strangers and pilgrims on earth, should have their conversation (country, Greek) in heaven, whence continually they wait, prepare for, and expect the Saviour, that they may receive and welcome Him at His coming.\* Do our prayers for revival really contemplate and ardently desire these objects? If a true revival of religion were to come, is the church generally prepared to act thus in a spirit and conduct becoming it? There is assuredly much ground, from appearances throughout the church, to call in question the sincerity of many petitions that are now offered on this subject, and to conclude that the great blessing is withheld because many who profess religion are not in a fit state to welcome it, or to surrender themselves to its influence. At one period of our Lord's personal ministry on earth it is recorded—"He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them." †

And the reason is elsewhere stated when it is said—"He marvelled because of their unbelief." The unbelief—and this implies the prayerlessness of the church—restrains the head of Omnipotence, and renders it morally unfit that mighty works of power and grace should be done among a people in this condition. Then, as earnest working is ever associated with success in the natural world, so prayer attests its reality by being conjoined with vigorous and sustained effort. If we are not diligently and

\* Philippians iii. 20.

† John xvi. 22, 24.



devotedly labouring to promote the power of true godliness in the church, and to spread abroad the savour of Christ's name, we give evidence that our prayers for the coming of Christ's kingdom are formal and insincere. When we pray for this great object with the heart, we stand prepared to devote our personal efforts and worldly substance for its achievements. Scripture, equally with right reason, clearly shows that "in proportion to the sincerity of devout desires for a given result will be readiness to labour for it."

The approaching glory of the last times, we are assured, will come in connection with the future wonderful achievements of prayer. The Scriptures contain frequent and ample assurances, 1, That the concluding period of the Christian dispensation will be one of increased light and abundant spiritual privilege; and 2, That the enjoyment of these blessings will be the fruit of a remarkable spirit of prayer poured out, and powerfully working throughout the church. This is the grand theme of many bright predictions, which display in the most lively and gorgeous colours the attractive dignity and beauty of the church, and the glory and riches of the nations, rescued from darkness and idolatry, brought to willing subjection to the enthroned Mediator, and filled with His glory. Our Lord, in the close of His great discourse of consolation, promised to terminate the days of His people's sorrows by His personal coming and manifestation—"I will come and see you again; and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." This He connected with such earnest, importunate supplication on the part of His people, that, compared with it, all their former prayers would appear

formal and empty. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."\* Before Zion's captivity shall be turned back, as "streams of water in the south," the servants of God, like Daniel, knowing that the (set) time of favour and deliverance is approaching, betake themselves to "seek by prayer and supplication and fasting" the enlargement and blessing promised. This is a necessary link in the chain of providential arrangement for their bestowal. The establishment of the Messiah's kingdom of power in the earth follows the loud general utterance, both by individuals and collective communities, of the petition—"Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as in heaven,"—and this universal pleading, accompanied by the efforts which are prompted by it, is among the most potent means for effecting the grand purpose. Prior to the Redeemer's dominion extending from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, all kings falling down before Him, and all nations serving Him—according to sure prediction it is declared—"He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised."† If the church is to appear arrayed in her beautiful garments—the joy of the whole earth, this will be in fulfilment of the promise in relation to her ministers and people—"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give Him no rest till He

\* John vi. 22, 24.

† Psalm lxxii. 8-15.

establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." \*

The church is taught and moved as with one heart and united voice to pray, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us;" and when this is generally done, the happy end shall be reached, God's "way shall be known upon earth," His "saving health among all nations." † The blessing is needed for the church, not as final or to be rested in, but as means for an end, and so soon as it is graciously given the most blessed results shall follow. Great systems of error and idolatry—Pagan, Popish, and Mohammedan—will be overthrown and destroyed. Like Elijah at Carmel, when he alone confronted the four hundred and fifty idolatrous priests and an idolatrous king and apostate nation led by them, so when God's servants mightily call in earnest prayer upon the Lord God of Israel to hear them, that men may be every where brought to know that He is God, and that they "do these things according to His word," enemies will be confounded, and the cause of truth and righteousness will triumph. Soon as the church, in all places and with heartfelt desire, shall importunately ask, "the heathen shall be given to Christ" for "His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession." ‡ The conversion and ingathering of the Jewish people follow the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, and are the fruit of fervent prayer. Not by the prophet's preaching, but immediately on his calling by prayer to the Spirit and breath to come from the four winds to blow on the valley of vision and breathe on the dry bones, were they quickened;

\* Isaiah lxii. 6, 7.    † Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.    ‡ Psalm ii. 8.

and "the whole house of Israel," revived from the dead, stood up instinct with life, "an exceeding great army." \* In a notable prophecy concerning the last times, we are distinctly told that to united concert in prayer, and holy resolution combined with it, we are to ascribe the revived power of religion in the church, the conversion of Israel, and the large accession of Gentile converts, joining themselves to the Lord and in fellowship with His people—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also, yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." † How bright and cheering is such a prospect! How happy this issue! How should it serve to excite Christians everywhere not merely to engage in *monthly concerts* of prayer for missions, or in the important ordinance of these last times—the "*world's week of prayer*," but to offer petitions daily for this glorious consummation!

We should often inquire solemnly, when so many profess to pray for the revival of religion and for the world's conversion, why does the work linger and the desired results do not follow? The main reason may be that Christians lay too much stress on other things,

\* Ezekiel xxxvii. 9-11.

† Zechariah viii. 20-23.



such as advancement in the intercourse of nations and civilization, the increase of numbers and wealth in the churches, the larger gifts of Christian benevolence, and the number of labourers in the field, while they undervalue and neglect the power of prayer. So long as this state of things continues, it need not be thought strange that little progress is made in converting the world to Christ; and that spiritual darkness, like a vast funeral pall, envelopes the nations, and "gross darkness the people." The ascended Redeemer promised to send the Comforter—the life-giving, sanctifying Spirit—to supply His personal presence to the church, and to fill the earth with His glory "as the waters cover the sea." The last times are to be eminently distinguished by the universal powerful effusion of the Spirit—"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water-courses."\* The fulfilment of these precious promises will realise to the church untold benefits and blessings of inconceivable value. It will impart power and life to all her ministers, elevate and hallow her fellowship, raise up and qualify sufficient instruments, as polished shafts in the Divine quiver, and render their labours remarkably successful. The spirit of enlarged liberality will, as in memorable past periods of refreshment from the presence of the Lord, bring plentiful gifts to the church's treasury; and the church's power and efficacy for enlightening

\* Isaiah xxxii. 15; xlv. 3, 4.



the nations and for bringing all men into subjection to the sceptre of Zion's King, shall be universally felt and acknowledged. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted upon the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." \* "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." † The full bestowal of these great blessings awaits the ascent from God's people of earnest prayers and supplications. The meridian brightness of the day of power will not come till a willing people plead with hearts poured out, "*O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!*" ‡

The Divine command and promise assure us of the efficacy of prayer in the last times for obtaining gracious manifold blessing. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." § "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." || When the Lord shall arise to work deliverance for His people, and shall "seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem"—in the day when he that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them, it is promised as the grand way of effecting these great works—"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications." ¶

In view of so many precious assurances, and of

\* Isaiah ii. 2.      † Psalm lxxvii. 6, 7.      ‡ Psalm xiv. 7.

§ Jer. xxxiii. 2.      || Isa. lxxv. 24.      ¶ Zech. xii. 8, 9.

the times of abundant blessing which are approaching, it concerns the whole church, ministers and people, to betake themselves to the great duty and privilege of continual, fervent, persevering, united prayer. Our present duty and obligation is to "Attempt great things, and expect great things." \* Individuals may, like Jacob, by fervent wrestling prayer, prevail with God and man for the blessing. This is a service in which the weakest and most retired believer may have a part, and may be owned hereafter as an instrument in the church's enlargement and the salvation of the world. As in nature, the wire of a child's kite, sent up into the atmosphere, will draw down the electric flash to the earth, and a peasant's voice sounding in Alpine regions brings down the avalanche, so the feeblest prayer of faith, entering the Temple above, may become the moving spring of blessings unnumbered to the church and to the world. Let us study more the mighty power of prayer, and learn, as we grasp "the golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints," to cherish inexpressible desires, and to mingle our petitions with the pleadings of our great High Priest in heaven. The morning of brightness and glory begins to dawn. The day draws nigh when countless prayers of Christ's faithful servants, which have long lain before the mercy-seat unanswered, will be returned with richest blessings; when the church in all lands, from every closet and family altar and social assembly, shall send up clouds of holy desires and earnest petitions. Then shall there descend a plenteous rain of blessing.

\* The motto of Robert Raikes, the founder of Sabbath Schools.

Men shall be blessed in Christ—"all nations shall call Him blessed." "The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." \*

ON PRAYER FOR MISSIONS—AND THE IMPORTANCE OF  
REVIVAL IN THE CHURCH.

The late distinguished missionary, *Dr. Duff*, speaking of the need of greater missionary zeal in the church and the increase of missionaries, on one occasion speaks of the churches as being to a sad extent destitute of holy zeal on this subject, and as yet "*only playing at missions*;" and with prophetic foresight and joyful hope, he says—"Some day the Lord will take the work into His own hands, and then rebuke the laggard zeal of those who will not come forward now to His help against the mighty. '*This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*' What a volume of significancy we have in these words! Long have all churches and societies laboured by all manner of imaginative plans, methods, and enginery to drive out the monster demon of Hindooism, and hitherto met with very partial success. Perhaps it may be to teach us all that '*this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,*'—by real self-emptying, self-denial, and humiliation before God, accompanied by fervent, importunate, persevering prayer. Instead, therefore, of acting any longer as ingenious schemers of new plans, or as critics, judges, and fault-finders with old ones, were all of us at home and abroad to betake ourselves more to self-humiliation and prayer, perhaps even this kind

\* Ps. lxxii. 17; Isa. xxxv. 1.

of demoniacal possession would soon be seen 'going out' from the souls of myriads, to the praise and glory of Jehovah's omnipotent grace." \*

Speaking again of the importance of *revival in the church* for awakening and extending a missionary spirit, *Dr. Duff* says—"I do devoutly declare that a great, wide-spread, universal revival would be the instantaneous and all-satisfying solution of all our difficulties at home and abroad. Oh, then, for such a revival! How long, Lord, how long? When wilt Thou rend Thy heavens and come down? When will Thy streams descend? These and such like are our daily aspirations. We are like the hart thirsting, panting, longing for the water brooks. We feel intensely that it is not argument, or discussion, or controversy that will ever win or convert a soul to God; that it is the Spirit's grace which alone can effectuate this; and it is in answer to believing, persevering, importunate prayer that the Spirit usually descends with His awakening, convicting, and converting influence. Our weapon therefore is more than ever the word of God and the arm that wields it—prayer. Surrounded as we are by the bristling forces and the frowning bulwarks of a three thousand years' old heathenism, we crave the sympathies and the prayers of our brethren in more highly favoured lands. Painfully familiar as we are with 'the hope deferred, which maketh the heart sick,' we often feel faint, very faint; yet, through God's grace, however faint, we have ever found ourselves 'still pursuing,' still holding on, with our face resolutely towards the enemy, whether confront-

\* *Life and Times of Alexander Duff, D.D., LL.D.*, by George Smith, vol. ii., p. 368.

ing us in open battle or only evading the sharp edge of the Spirit by timely flight. Our motto has ever been—‘Onward, onward!’—no matter what might be the Red Sea of difficulties ahead of us. But oh! as men—men of like feelings and infirmities as others—it would tend to cheer and hearten us did we find ourselves encompassed with the sympathies and the prayers of brethren at a distance. Not that God has ever left us without some witness or manifestation of His favour. We have had our own share of spiritual success; a goodly number of souls from first to last have been converted to God. For this we feel deeply grateful. But we long for thousands and millions. Will the church at home, if wearied of giving its moneys, assist us by a united, mighty host and army of prayers?”



### PART III.

## PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

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### INTRODUCTORY.

AFTER all that has been spoken and written concerning prayer, we need teaching above what is human to guide us, and enable us to perform aright the great duty. How ignorant and guilty creatures shall 'come before the most high God—how to pray so as to prevail in prayer, and obtain from Him what we need, can only be made known by Him who is revealed as the Hearer of Prayer, who has opened up for sinful man a new and living way of access to His immediate presence, and has established prayer as the ordained means of intercourse and blessing between Him and human beings.

Our venerable Westminster Divines declare, that "The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction in prayer is that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called the Lord's Prayer." \* This comprehensive statement teaches—1, That the revealed will of God, the Bible in all its parts, is an infallible and sufficient directory in prayer. All the *doctrines* of the word of God, making known what

\* *Shorter Catechism*, Question 99.

God is, His purposes and works, what we are and what we need, are truths which may be employed as petitions at the throne of grace. The *precepts* of the Bible instruct us in relation to our duties, and the grace and strength required for their performance. The *promises* of the word, manifold and “exceeding great and precious,” are at once our fullest instruction and encouragement in prayer. They open up to us the extensive range of believing supplication, and manifest the infinite readiness of God who gives them to relieve every want of His people. They supply continually a fresh impulse to the needy suppliant, and fill the mouth with arguments in prayer. The *threatenings* of the Bible teach us to draw near to God with holy fear, and indicate for our use *deprecatory petitions*. Its *historical facts*, which are the record of the Divine dealings with individuals and communities, good and bad, present the most suitable considerations for pleading at the mercy-seat. And the numerous *instances* related in the Scriptures of the prayers of God’s servants which were graciously heard and answered, show impressively the spirit of accepted prayer and its precious fruit, and furnish invaluable examples of the right way of prayer, and of the manifold rich benefits that flow from the exercise. Throughout the Bible are everywhere scattered many petitions dictated by the Spirit, with appropriate arguments to enforce them. The Book of Psalms especially—the church’s inspired canon of praise, which has been aptly termed “the Bible of believing experience”—is eminently fitted to teach men to pray, as it shows clearly how men pray when influenced by the Spirit. Judiciously has it been said—“In this book, the Spirit of God has delineated His own operations on

the hearts of His people. The book generally is nothing more or less than a diagram of a good man's heart—the inside section of a believer's soul."\*

In the Bible we are clearly taught whence all needed assistance in prayer comes, the way in which we may expect answers of prayer, and the blessed effects of habitual communion with God at the mercy-seat. The Scriptures being thus designed to teach us everything respecting the matter and manner of prayer, we should resort to them continually for these important purposes. An intimate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures is indispensable to all proper engagement in the work of prayer. It need not be wondered at that so many restrain prayer before God, or offer only vague, confused, and formal petitions, when the Bible is not diligently read, and its truths are not pondered and believed. It is only in as far as the word becomes to us "the engrafted word," and dwells in us "richly in all wisdom," that we are filled with holy thoughts and emotions, and that we have "boldness,"—all freedom of utterance and copiousness of diction, to pour out our hearts before God. Thus have we the confidence that we ask according to His will, and that we have the petitions which we desired of Him.†

2. That what is "commonly termed the Lord's Prayer is *our special rule of direction in prayer*." The designation—"THE LORD'S PRAYER," is not given to this prayer because it was designed for the full expression of the Saviour's own feelings and desires in communion with the Father. It contains a confession

\* The "Mercy-Seat." Thoughts suggested by the Lord's Prayer, by Gardiner Spring, D.D., p. 24.

† 1 John v. 14, 15.

of sin and a prayer for forgiveness which He could not make. And though, as the Substitute of His people and the High Priest of their profession, He indentifies Himself with them in all their petitions, this brief comprehensive prayer is, properly viewed, the *substance* of the prayers of Christ's disciples, one designed to meet their diversified circumstances and wants, to express their fervent desires, and to bring near to them great and abundant blessings. While the great priestly prayer of Christ recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John may be appropriately termed the *Lord's Prayer*, yet the common, time-honoured designation of the form which He taught His disciples early in His earthly ministry is not to us without affecting interest and importance. It is the Master's prayer, who created and redeemed us, who owns us, knows our wants and trials, and has in wondrous condescension provided and revealed a way of deliverance and salvation. He composed and uttered this prayer on earth. He caused it to be written and placed in the opening part of the everlasting gospel, and designed it ever after to be constantly used by His people for their own benefit and in grateful remembrance of Him.

The Lord's Prayer was dictated by the Saviour in answer to a petition which we need constantly to offer, quite as much as did the disciples in the days of His flesh. "Lord, teach us to pray;" and we should regard with the profoundest thought and veneration His answer to the request. It is a great comprehensive prayer for His people, asking according to His direction. It has been sometimes alleged that it is not suitable for Christians now, as the petitions contained in it are not expressly offered in Christ's name, and there is no expressed reference to His

atonement and intercession. But this is certainly a misconception and a mistake. The prayers of ancient believers, before the Saviour's advent, were presented to God for His name's sake, and Christ was the angel of the covenant of whom it was said, "*My name is in Him.*"\* The Lord's Prayer is offered not only in reliance on His mediation, but is that which He specially directs and authorises us to offer. Besides, in every expression, petition, and argument of this prayer we see Jesus; He and the Father are one. He has a name given Him which is above every name. He is the blessed and only Potentate, and His kingdom ruleth over all. He is the "living bread" which came down from heaven. He has power on earth to forgive sins. He is "able to succour them that are tempted." He is the "angel that redeems from all evil." The kingdom, power, and glory pertain to Him alone. And He is the fulfilment and confirmation of all Divine promises and gracious assurances. Himself is "the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Well did one of the Christian fathers term the Lord's Prayer, "*The gospel abbreviated.*" It is indeed "an epitome of the gospel." The more clearly we understand the gospel of the grace of God, "the gospel of the glory of Christ," the more shall we love this wonderful prayer; and glorying in the gospel, "the power of God, and the wisdom of God to them that believe," we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, as we offer the Divinely prescribed petitions, and believe and expect gracious answers.

The Lord's Prayer is recorded as having been given

\* Exodus xxiii. 20.



on two occasions in our Lord's ministry on earth, and is presented in two forms. The first in Matthew vi. 9-14, more fully is incorporated amid the instructions and warnings of the Sermon on the Mount; the second in a later part of our Lord's personal ministry, as recorded in Luke xi. 1-5. The evangelist relates that, on some occasion, as the Saviour was praying in the hearing of His disciples, "as He ceased," one of them said, speaking for them all, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." These words imply what we are nowhere else told in the gospels, that John, the forerunner, gave, beyond his public instructions to the multitudes who waited on his ministry, specific, private teaching to his disciples on the nature and manner of prayer. They render it probable also that this disciple had not heard the Sermon on the Mount, containing the Saviour's teaching on the subject of prayer. Deeply impressed with the words which he had just heard, and with the devout, elevated spirit in which they were uttered, and thus made sensible of the great imperfection of their own prayers, the disciples earnestly sought from their Master such instruction about praying as would enable them to engage in the duty with something of the like power, fervour, and spiritual enjoyment as He had expressed in their hearing.

The differences in the two forms of prayer as recorded by the first and third evangelist are observable, and have been differently accounted for. Besides a different expression in several petitions, that in Matthew is fuller, and the prayer concludes with the closing words—"For thine is the kingdom, &c.," which are omitted by Luke. Two of the ancient fathers, *Origen* and *Augustine*, expressly say that Luke omits the third petition—"Thy will be

done," &c.\* It is not required, as some plead, that we should take Luke's record of the prayer to be the real account, and that given by Matthew to be less exact. It is evidently better to regard the prayer as communicated by our Lord on two different occasions, once when He was offering cautions and warnings respecting devotional exercises generally, and again, in a brief form, in answer to the request of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray."

When our Lord said, in first giving this prayer, "After this manner pray ye," He evidently meant that this should be a *model* prayer. He referred to its spirit, contents, and the order and scope of the petitions. And when, in propounding it the second time, He said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father," &c., He plainly taught that it may be used as an actual prayer. The question whether our Lord, by dictating this prayer, sanctioned the use of a liturgy, or the constant use of written forms of prayer, may be readily disposed of. The variations in the utterances on the two occasions, with the introductory phrase, "After this manner pray ye," seem clearly to imply that the prayer was designed to be a model to which all our prayers in spirit and matter and order were to be conformed, rather than the exact words to be frequently or constantly used in coming to the Hearer of Prayer. On many grounds it may be shown that the Saviour, in enjoining prayer to His people as their great duty and privilege, has

\* "Slight verbal alterations, but the same in substance and sequence, is a circumstance which shows that this prayer is so perfect and so truly expressive of the inmost mind of the Saviour, that it possesses an eternal character, all comprehensive and exhaustive." — *Saphir*, Lectures on the Lord's Prayer, p. 48.

nowhere declared that established forms of prayer were designed to be used by the church. Nowhere has He sanctioned a restriction to any set forms of prayer. In all the instances of prayer recorded in the Old and New Testaments, we hear nothing of written prayers being employed. They grew out of the peculiar conditions in which they were offered, and were presented under the impulse of their peculiar emergencies. In the frequent prayers recorded in apostolic epistles, there is no reference whatever to the Lord's Prayer; and in most cases these prayers are entirely different from it in thought and method. Prescribed written forms, even the best, invert the true order of prayer, making the words move the heart, instead of the thoughts and emotions of the heart directing the words. Their tendency is to restrain the operations of the Spirit, who helps our infirmities, by teaching us what and how to pray as we ought. Justly has it been remarked by *Dr. Owen* that "God has promised to give the spirit of prayer to those who pray, but He has nowhere promised to give His Spirit to any man or set of men to enable them to write prayers for others, or to help in using set forms of prayer." It can, moreover, be readily shown that no set form of prayer is adequate to meet the necessities of the church at all times, or to express the states and wants of individuals or societies in their diversified circumstances. To require men always to pray in the words of a prescribed form, even in public devotional services, is absurd and unreasonable. The obvious tendency of such a rule is to render prayer a perfunctory lip service, and to lead the thought and heart from entire dependence on the spirit of grace and suppli-

cation. Though the attempt has been made to prove that the use of Liturgies is of apostolic origin, and coeval with the introduction of Christianity, it can be clearly shown that the attempt has been a total failure. The synagogue worship contained no set forms of prayer; and no account whatever of written prayers being used in the assemblies of the synagogue has come down to us. When the Christian church transferred for the most part the synagogue order to its public services, there was therefore found in its order no observance of established forms of prayer. There is the ample testimony of early ecclesiastical history that prescribed forms of prayer were unknown in the church for several centuries after the ascension of the Saviour. *Justin Martyn*, describing the church worship of the latter part of the second century, says—"The presiding minister offers up prayer and thanksgiving, *according to his ability*," plainly implying that he was not limited to prayers read from a book. And *Tertullian*, writing about nearly the same time, declares—"We pray without a monitor, because we pray from the heart." The evidence of antiquity is so full and uncontradicted on this point, that able and candid writers of the Church of England have been constrained to admit that "the public services of the primitive church were all performed extempore, or *memoriter*, and that no one office was reduced to writing until the fourth century."

While it may be admitted that, in some rare cases, a form of prayer may be allowable for weak persons in conducting domestic or social prayers, and that it is better to use a form as a temporary help than not to pray at all, none should be encouraged to have



recourse to forms for habitual use. We should go continually to the Divine word for instruction in relation to prayer, seek to feel our wants, to have the heart duly impressed as in God's sight, and then give free utterance to the sense of our sinful necessities and infirmities. If, at His command, we pour out our hearts before Him, and when He says, "Seek ye my face," our hearts reply, "Thy face, O Lord, will we seek," we shall feel no lack of a form of prayer; and with the boldness of unrestrained expression we shall come to the throne of grace, that we may "obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need."

Though the Lord's Prayer is designed chiefly to be used as a model prayer, yet it may properly be employed at times as a prayer dictated by our Lord and Master, to be by us actually offered at His throne. The superstitious use of it, which began in the church in the third and fourth centuries, and which is followed in some Protestant churches, as when it is repeated three or four times in the same service, or appended to prayers in the family in daily domestic worship, is to be avoided. This would seem to imply that there is something more sacred in the words of the Lord's Prayer than in the petitions which the Spirit dictates, and that all our prayers are not after this model. Such frequent use of the words amounts to the "vain repetition" in prayer which the Saviour prohibited. But there is at the same time no doubt that for children and young converts to be taught to utter it as a prayer in a devout and solemn manner is of much importance; and even experienced Christians may at times derive no little spiritual benefit by offering up their



petitions in the spirit which the Lord inculcated, and in the words which He dictated.\*

\* It is related of *Richard Baxter*, that when he was confined to bed during his last illness, and passed nights without sleep, he frequently found much comfort in repeating slowly, with devout meditation and ejaculations, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. There are occasions not a few when Christians might find it profitable to engage in the same exercises.

## SECTION I.

### THE ARRANGEMENT—GENERAL MATTER AND SPIRIT OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

CONSIDERING this prayer as a Divine model, we may expect to find it in structure, matter, arrangement, and spirit perfect as its author—singularly fitted to express the circumstances, necessities, and desires of those for whose use it was intended, and to exhibit them in that frame of spirit which is suitable for the reception of the blessings sought. Much has been written concerning its arrangement and method; and still the more it is contemplated, the more is it calculated to fill the mind with wonder and admiration.

This prayer naturally divides itself into *three parts*—A Preface or Introduction, Petitions, and the Conclusion. The petitions, according to the Westminster Divines, following the Greek fathers and the reformed church, are *six*; but according to the Lutheran church, following the Latin fathers and some of the best modern critics and expositors, they are *seven*. Although it is not of much moment which of these divisions is adopted, there is, we think, sufficient ground to adopt the division into seven rather than six petitions. Throughout the Scriptures the number seven is used as the number of perfection, and as such is employed eminently to designate the work of God. There is an obvious advantage, as will be afterwards shown, in making the last petition two instead of one, as it brings in an important matter in

prayer to which otherwise there is given no definite expression.

The *structure and arrangement* are, furthermore, deserving of notice. They discover throughout a Divine order and symmetry. There are two chief parts, the former referring to *Divine things*—God's name, kingdom, and will; and the second, to *human things*—the bodily life and its wants, sin and evil of whatever kind. Of the different petitions, the first three are about matters that principally concern God's glory. These are placed in the foreground, and we are taught first to offer them before we present any petitions which are strictly personal for ourselves, whether about necessary outward supplies or about the wants of the soul. It has been remarked that in the first part of the prayer we meet with the threefold occurrence of the pronoun *thy*—*thy* name, *thy* kingdom, *thy* will; whereas in the second, the pronouns *our* and *us* constantly occur. Six of the seven petitions are concerning *spiritual* things, and only one respecting *temporal*, thus clearly indicating that spiritual gifts and blessings are to us transcendently important above those which are natural and temporary. In the prayers which are prescribed or exemplified throughout the Scripture, there is too a marked distinction observable in the mode in which we are instructed to ask spiritual and temporal benefits. The former we may ask absolutely, taking no denial, as they are offered to us in absolute and unconditional promises; the latter we are to pray for in submission to the Divine will, so far as it shall serve for God's glory and our best interests. The prayer itself is short, that it may be speedily learned, easily remembered, and readily used. The expressions are simple and most appropriate. The

words are plain, unadorned, and so lucid that they cannot be misunderstood. It is the prayer of our childhood ; yet its pointed and weighty petitions are adapted to all the varied scenes of life, and not a few of God's saints have gathered from its frequent use strong confidence and consolation in death.\* The spirit which it breathes throughout is that which the Holy Spirit implants and excites, the spirit of love and reverence to the Father in heaven, of earnest desire for the coming of His kingdom, of obedient submission to God's will, of forgiveness and universal charity, and of the most ardent desires after deliverance from evil and after perfect holiness. While in its plainness and simplicity it is purposely adapted to the ignorant and inexperienced, it gives at the same time utterance to thoughts and aspirations the most lofty, and holds forth to suplicants treasures of priceless value.†

\* In the Diary and Letters of the late excellent *Dr. Heugh* of Glasgow, there is frequent mention of his realising spiritual support and comfort from the words of the Lord's Prayer and the expressions of the twenty-third Psalm.

† The effect of the devout utterance of the Lord's Prayer upon the enemies of Christianity is shown in the following incident mentioned by *Arnot*, in his "*Unsu Vatu*" (p. 166)—  
 "A traveller in the East (Hay) was pitching his tent near an Arab village when he was surrounded by an excited crowd, who cursed him as an atheist. He addressed an aged venerable man, whom he supposed to be a priest—'How can you say that we do not believe in God? Listen to my daily prayer and then judge.' He repeated solemnly the Lord's Prayer. The people listened with amazement. At length the priest exclaimed, 'Never will I speak against the followers of such a faith ; your prayer shall be mine till the hour of my departure comes. Repeat it, I beg of you, O Nazarene, that we may learn it, and write it in golden letters.' "

Its fulness and comprehensive nature are quaintly expressed by one who maintained frequent intercourse with God at the mercy-seat—"I used to think the Lord's Prayer was a short prayer; but as I live longer, and see more of life, I begin to believe there is no such thing as getting through it. If a man in praying that prayer were to be stopped in every word, until he thoroughly prayed it, it would take him a lifetime." "Our Father,"—there would be a wall 100 feet high in just these two words to most men. If they might say—"Our Tyrant," or "Our Monarch," or even "Our Creator," they could get along with it, but "Our Father,"—why, the man is almost a saint who can pray that. You read, "Thy will be done." You say to yourself—"Oh! I can pray that," and all the time your mind goes round in immense circuits and far-off distances; but God is continually bringing the circuit nearer to you, till He says, "How is it about your business and your daily life?" This is a revolutionary portion. It would make any man's shop or store tumble to the ground to utter it. Who can stand at the end of the avenue along which all his pleasant thoughts and wishes are blossoming like flowers, and send these terrible words, "Thy will be done," crushing down through it? I think it is the most fearful prayer to pray in the world." Well may the most prayerful confess with *Luther*—"That in our lifetime we are only living the high and deep lessons of these petitions, and so it will take eternity to give them their answer." \*

\* Some of the ancient fathers styled the Lord's Prayer "The Pearl of Prayer," and "Breviarium Evangelium,"—a compend of the gospel.



## SECTION II.—THE PREFACE OR INVOCATION.

“OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.”

THE invocation in the Lord's Prayer presents to us the object of prayer in the most endearing aspect and attractive relation. Coming to God in acts of worship, we must “believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Our Lord teaching to pray exhibits the Hearer of Prayer as a *personal* God, as there cannot possibly be the fixing of the desires and confidence of the heart on a mere abstraction, and there is no ground of personal access to that which is not personal. Then the Being that we worship is not, as the god of the Stoics, indifferent about human relations, and unconcerned about the affairs of His dependent creatures. Nor is He, as the God adored by the followers of the false prophet, chiefly displayed as *Allah*—the all-powerful. On the contrary, He is brought near to us, standing in the most majestic and yet the tenderest relations, so as to attract our regard, win our confidence, and draw forth the strongest love and earnest hope of our hearts toward Him.

The opening words of the prayer—“Our Father which art in heaven,” are simple but most comprehensive. They disclose to us the grand mystery of revelation—God in Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They present in full view the Christian's God—the sole and exclusive object of His veneration and worship, the ground of all his trust and hope,

the source of all the good which he can possibly desire or hope to enjoy. The weighty remark of *Madame de Stael*, that "the Lord's Prayer is a sufficient proof of the truth of Christianity," is specially applicable to the Preface, as in a brief condensed sentence it presents the Christian's God in a view pre-eminently glorious and excellent above all that any system of mere human philosophy or religion has ever exhibited Him.

God, as Creator, is *universal Father*; and as such may be addressed in prayer by persons of every age and condition—Pagans, Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou art the potter, and we are all the work of Thy hand." (Isaiah lxiv. 8). If God hears the cry of the young ravens, and cares for all His irrational creatures, so as to feed them with food convenient, when they look to Him, we cannot doubt that there is none of the vast family of mankind, who will lift up his thoughts and desires heavenward, but will find a Father's ear open to hear him, and a Father's heart ready to compassionate and relieve him. The depth and full import of the invocation can only be understood by the believing Christian, but this hinders not that others may use it. Faith may be weak and imperfect, yet this does not prevent those who are as babes, weak in knowledge, and with stammering lips, saying, as they believe in God Almighty, "Our Father which art in heaven." One of the prominent features of the Lord's Prayer is, that it makes slight demands upon our faith. The Saviour who taught it accommodates it to those of "weak and little faith;" and the convinced sinner, not yet brought to

the saving knowledge of God in Christ, has the warrant to utter the cry of want and distress in His ear, who, as universal Parent, can never be unconcerned about the condition and need of any who come to Him. The prodigal son, when pressed with want he arose and went to his father, confessing sin, was not refused, though he was not restored to the family. On the contrary, his father anticipates his request, when he "ran and fell on his neck and kissed him," and welcomed him to all the privileges of the paternal home. Simon Magus, while still "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," is directed by the apostle to "repent of his wickedness, and to pray God, if perhaps the thought of his heart may be forgiven him." (Acts viii. 22). A mother, it has been remarked, does not withdraw her love from a child, or withhold the help it needs, though it yet cannot call her mother. So the heavenly Father does not refuse to hearken to the cry of the needy and distressed, although it is uttered in weakness and ignorance. Such have unquestionably the warrant to cast themselves on the Father's pity, and to have recourse to His boundless open stores for all needed supplies. If the weakest and most erring throws himself with all the confidence he can command into the Lord's Prayer, that prayer will acquire more influence upon his heart and life, and may prove a means of leading him to that faith by which he receives "the adoption of sons." "If, when we were enemies, Christ died for us," and when dead in sin He quickened us, can He not, even when hating their character, yearn in pity and compassion toward them? The wanderers in the wilderness, the hungry and thirsty, with their soul fainting within them, cry unto the Lord in

their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distresses. (Psalm cvii. 6).\*

But there is a higher relation between God and man than that which is merely of nature. The real Fatherhood of God is revealed to us in the dispensation of the Spirit. By faith receiving Christ, we have “power to become the sons of God,” and we are constituted members of the one spiritual family in heaven and earth named after Christ. In regeneration we are born of God, and by adoption we are numbered with the children of God, and have a right to all their privileges and immunities. Christ Jesus, the eternal Son, is the Elder Brother, and all the redeemed united to Him share the title and privilege of being His brother. He, the Son of God, became the Son of man, that they might be exalted to be the children of God—heirs and joint heirs with Him of His Father and God in covenant. In a similar sense God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and at the same time the Father of all who believe in the Saviour. When He was about to enter into His glory, He said, “I ascend unto my Father and your

\* “The Lord’s Prayer is the prayer of fallen, ignorant, sinful humanity. Use it earnestly and there shall be an answer. In using it you will learn and you will grow. Nay, if you stopped with these two words—‘Our Father,’ and perhaps they are all that the child, all that the poor, all that the common worshipper really understands of the Lord’s Prayer—you would have done the chief part of prayer, you would have stepped across the barrier, you would have seen God, you would have put your life into God’s life, you would have felt the meaning of it, you would have seen it all as a plan and as a discipline, you would have become reconciled to your place and to your lot, you would have realised a new relationship, of which the name and the nature is love.”—*The Lord’s Prayer*. By O. J. Vaughan, D.D., p. 17, 18.



Father, and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17). Believers have a common relation with Him to a covenant God. They have an interest in His great love; they share a Father's tender pity and compassion; they become like Him, and are made partakers of all His fulness and blessedness.

In all ages the people of God have enjoyed the hope and consolation of this high filial relation. The church of old pleaded in penitential confession—"Now, O Lord, thou art our Father." "Behold, see, we beseech Thee, we are all thy people." (Isaiah lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8, 9). In paternal expostulation, Jehovah says to His people when wayward and rebellious, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" (Jeremiah iii. 4). And again, revealing the wondrous way of covenant mercy and love, God asks, as if non-plussed, "How shall I put thee among the children?" And Himself makes known the way, when He says, "Thou shalt call me My Father, and shalt not turn away from Me." (Jeremiah iii. 19). Under the gospel dispensation the privilege of believers in coming to God as their Father is more fully known. The "spirit of adoption" has supplanted the "spirit of bondage again to fear." Believers are now the sons of God; they have the "white stone," and "in it a new name." In approaching the throne of grace, God is revealed to them in His majesty and the greatness of His paternal love as their Father. The spirit and burden of all their prayers are, "Abba, Father;" and however great their ill desert and unworthiness, they have all encouragement to expect the relief of all their distresses, and the full supply of all their wants. How sweet and precious to believers are the words



of invocation of the Lord's Prayer! The most unworthy may cast himself on the Father's pity and love, the weakest lean upon His arm of power, the tempted and distressed may trust that He will interpose for their help and deliver them from the rage of enemies, the most destitute may rest for the supply of all their necessities, and in all changed circumstances and dangers in life and death, the saints have the amplest grounds of assured confidence and hope in the faithfulness of their unchangeable Father and friend. He cannot deny Himself, nor will He ever deny the relation to Himself into which, in the day of His grace, He has brought the redeemed. “I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim,” ever wayward and rebellious, “is my first-born.” (Jer. xxxi. 9). “Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.” (Isaiah lxiii. 16).

Again, the preface to this prayer sets before us the *fraternal relation*. The Saviour teaches us to say, in beginning to pray, “*Our Father*.” We may unquestionably, in approaching God on the mercy-seat, use the singular number—address Him in the first person and say, “My Father,” as we often say “My God.” But we are impressively taught in the opening words the *social* character of the prayer, and that in offering it we are to pray *with* and *for others*. There is no selfishness or exclusiveness in the exercise. Our sonship in the spiritual family is inseparable from our brotherhood. United to the One living Head, we are members of His mystical body, and members one of another. Christianity alone exhibits the social relations in their proper power and influence, and refines and elevates them. It displays human beings

of every rank and condition bound together by the ties of the same nature, exposed to like trials and calamities, called to suffering and death, and destined to fellowship in happiness or misery throughout eternity. Hence arises the obligation to extend sympathy and help to every human being as his case and circumstances require, and ever to cherish the thought and act on the principle that "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." But while we are thus taught that "prayers and supplications are to be made for all men," there are closer and more elevated views of the social relation with which we should be specially concerned in addressing our Father in heaven. The bonds of near kindred, the domestic state, the ties of citizenship, the relation of rulers and people, exhibit the social principle in some of its most powerful operations, and these present the strongest claims for frequent *united* and *intercessory* prayer. The church of God exhibits the highest form of an associated community. It is composed of all who love God and their Saviour, and are united together by the bond of love; like children born in one house, though separated and in different conditions, they remain bound together by their love to a common altar. Our delight in social prayer is the evidence that we are truly prayerful, as we have the fullest assurance that united prayer is heard and answered. The Author of this prayer assures us that, "Where two or three meet in His name, there He is in the midst of them," and "if any two on earth agree to ask, it shall be given them by their Father in heaven." When we pray, "Our Father," we unite with thousands of the children of God, known or unknown to us, existing in different churches, and dispersed

throughout many lands. Every time we utter these words from the heart we pray “for all saints,” and “our souls meet and blend with all Christian souls in God’s presence.” Praying in closest union and sympathy with this great multitude of fellow-saints, our united prayers come up before God, and like a cloud of sweet incense cover the mercy-seat in the heavenly temple. However solitary and weak, we receive blessing rich and suitable in answer to the prayers of fellow-saints; and our prayers, however feeble, may be means of support and comfort to the children of God who are scattered abroad. How much should we value the utterance, “*Our Father*,” in all our prayers! How earnestly should we seek to comprehend its deep and extensive meaning, and in the spirit of fervent universal love ever to express it! As we pray for ourselves, we should constantly intercede for others. We should bear on our spirits our friends, our pastors, the whole church, and even our enemies, and regard them as one with ourselves in confession, and supplication, and thanksgiving. This brief but emphatic invocation overlooks all distinctions in society, all infirmities and faults in fellow-men, disregards denominational divisions and colours; and, recognising alone a common brotherhood, asks from our gracious Father blessings for the whole family, which become doubled and trebled to us as they come into the possession of all with whom and for whom we plead.

*Thirdly.* The invocation reminds us of the *heavenly relation*. We address God, to whom we pray, as “Our Father which art *in the heavens*.” “Our God is in the heavens; what pleased Him, He hath done.” “He is in heaven, and thou on earth; let thy words be few.” Our thoughts and hearts are, in prayer,

lifted up to God dwelling in heaven, as marking distance and by way of contrast. The vastness, purity, and calmness of the glorious world above show Him, who fills heaven with His presence and glory, as infinitely removed from this earth's littleness, changes, and confusions. Heaven is the seat of His throne, and He has all authority and power to meet the case of every suppliant. As in the world of nature, the influences of the heavens on the lower creation are ever benignant and bountiful, so from our Father in heaven descends to His children every good and perfect gift. He is free from "all variableness and shadow of turning," and therefore may we ever have the fullest confidence in His unchangeable grace, mercy, and faithfulness. Through the entrance of Christ the Elder Brother to glory heaven is brought down to earth; and, like Jacob's ladder, on which angel feet were ascending and descending, there is opened up a short and easy way of communication between both worlds. The position of the words, "Our Father which art in heaven," teaches us that God, exalted in glory, is yet near to all who call upon Him in truth. The King eternal, immortal, and invisible, by writing His name, "Our Father," gives us access to Him as His children. We can speak to Him with the feeble words of a child, and yet be audible. His presence is high and wide as the vault of heaven above the earth, and yet in amazing condescension He bows the heavens and comes down. To all who know and approach Him as their Father, heaven is opened in all its fulness and bliss to supply their wants of whatever kind, and to satisfy them with blessings of goodness manifold.

The expressive, beautiful words of this invocation



convey the *most weighty instructions* as *they breathe the most devotional spirit*. The Preface to the Lord's Prayer "teaches us to draw nigh to God with all holy reverence and confidence as children to a father, who is able and ready to help us, and that we should pray with and for others."\* Or, as it is more fully expressed in the *Larger Catechism*,† "'The Preface to the Lord's Prayer teaches us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of His Fatherly goodness, and our interest therein; with reverence and all other childlike dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehensions of His sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension; as also to pray with and for others.'"‡

In coming to God as our Father in heaven we think of Him and adore Him in His covenant character as our God and Father in Christ; we claim a part in the fellowship of the church of the First-born; and we seek "the things that are above," where "Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God,"—where saints place their treasure, and have their hearts there also. The *spirit* which the right use of the invocation generates and invigorates is one of *deepest reverence and humility*. The chief attitude of the soul in prayer is humility; and the more we cherish the spirit of self-abasement, the fitter are we

\* "Shorter Catechism," *Quest.* 100.

† *Quest.* 189.

‡ In this, as in several other cases, the briefer answer of the *Shorter Catechism* is better adapted for the instruction of babes in Christ than the more elaborate expressions of the larger symbol. As the Lord's Prayer is the prayer of our childhood, nothing can more suitably express its spirit than that of a child coming to the father whom it regards with reverence, heartfelt love, and all hopeful confidence.



prepared to come before the most high God, and the more may we expect to realise communion with Him. Contemplating our Father riding on the heaven of heavens in His power and majesty, is calculated to humble us to the dust as we come into His presence. Yet may we rise above discouraging dread, and rejoice that "the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, and dwells in the high and holy place," dwells also "with him who is of a broken and contrite spirit, and who trembles at His word."\* While the third heavens are the habitation of His glory, the humble heart is the abode of His grace. The spirit of all right prayer, which is that of unhesitating trust and assured confidence, is strongly expressed here. Just as a confiding child thinks its father can do everything, and trusts him implicitly for all needed help and the supply of every want, so we come to our Father in heaven with reverential confidence, and have the firmest trust in His providence and grace. As there is nothing too hard for the Almighty, we may rely on His power in our felt weakness for help in labour and danger, and for support and deliverance from all enemies. And from the boundless stars in the heavens, where our Father dwells, we can look for the supply of our every possible need. In the quaint but apposite language of *Luther*, we may say, when we approach Him who hears prayer—"If I could only truly believe it, that God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all things, is my Father, I could conclude that Christ is my Brother, and that all things are mine; Gabriel my servant, and Raphael my chorister, and all angels ministering to me in my necessities, and sent to my aid by my heavenly Father."

\* Isa. lxvi. 2.

The *filial* spirit to which first of all the invocation gives utterance is, in every respect, childlike, docile, meek, unsuspicious, submissive, and earnest. Thus are we come with assured confidence to our Father in heaven, as we pour out our hearts before Him. Our trust should be ever appropriating. As little children in words express their claim to all that belongs to their father, and say of all possessions in the family, “our,” so should we claim in prayer to all that our Father in heaven is and has. “All things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” (1 Cor. iii. 22).

The spirit of the invocation is, moreover, that of expansive, *strongest love*. When we say, “Our Father,” not only do we express the love of our hearts toward God, our heavenly Father, because of His unspeakable excellence, and because He first loved us, but we likewise declare our love to all who belong to Him, and who bear His image and likeness. Loving Him that begat, we love every one that is begotten of Him. Our love to the unseen Saviour embraces with special affection the whole household of faith. As He loves them ever “with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness” draws them, so we love them unfeignedly with a pure heart, rejoicing in their joys, sharing in their sorrows, and having complacency and lively delight in spiritual communion with them. To “brotherly kindness” we add “charity”—the love of benevolence to all men. He who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh so loved a lost and perishing world as to give His only-begotten Son, that the guilty might be rescued from the curse and brought to life eternal. If the Saviour assumed human nature, and gave His life a ransom for many, our

love should be shown to sinners, wanderers, and outcasts. This is best manifested in praying and labouring for their spiritual benefit. The soul of communion is tender, strong, spiritual affection. If we would know the fellowship of saints, love to Christ and fellow-believers must be the all-mastering principle and emotion of our hearts. To be a benefit and blessing to others, we must so love them as to be ready to make self-sacrifices, and to perform all offices of love for their advantage. The spirit of unity, brotherhood, benevolence, which is expressed when we say, "Our Father," is at once the grand witness to the truth and power of Christianity, and an eminent means of the world's conversion. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 34). In the answer to the Saviour's prayer that His people may be one in Him, as the Father and the Son are one in ineffable union, the world will be brought to believe in the mission of the Redeemer and to embrace His salvation. How important and valuable is this spirit of holy brotherhood and Christian benevolence! How should we be careful ever to manifest it in vigorous operation by united and intercessory prayer!

The *heavenly* relation exhibited in the opening of the Lord's Prayer is designed to draw our thoughts and affections to things above, and to lead us to know our citizenship and country in heaven. Childhood thinks of heaven as the place where God reigns—whither the Saviour has ascended; to which loved ones go at death; where all is bright, and pure, and blissful; where the greatest happiness is reserved for the pure and the faithful. Heaven is our loved home, into which are gathered those who are near.

and dear to us—holy angels and glorified saints, and where are to be possessed fully and for ever the treasures of infinite grace and love. When we address God in prayer as our Father in heaven, we not only believe in the ultimate bliss of the redeemed, and in God in Christ as its fulness and crown, but we express a lively hope of coming ourselves to the inheritance of the saints in light. This hope, the fruit of faith, is strengthening, sanctifying, and joy-inspiring. It is our “helmet” in the day of conflict; the “anchor” within the veil, to enable us to out-ride the storms of life and death. It is our guiding star while we wait for the Saviour; the sure harbinger of the day of cloudless brightness and eternal glory. Let us ever remember that this spirit of childlike confidence and fervent love and animating hope, is that in which alone we can present this invocation. Let it prevail in all the thoughts and emotions of our hearts, and find free and full expression in all our prayers.

The following judicious remarks are made by a Continental theologian in one of the latest works on the Lord's Prayer:—“There is perhaps no sign by which we can better ascertain the character and measure of our inner life than the way and manner *in which we say the Lord's Prayer*. If the words glide readily and smoothly, half unthinkingly over our lips, it is evidence of great immaturity—of a superficial and careless spirit. They are words charged with weight and meaning. The more fully we master and enter into the spirit of the words we utter, the healthier and stronger will be our religious life, the greater the blessings which prayer will bring us. When we thank God for all His benefits and gifts, we must include the Lord's Prayer as one of the greatest—



a gift that adapts itself so wondrously to all ages, all conditions of life, all characters, and which seems to grow with ourselves in intrinsic worth. If God in His grace caused us to see the light of the world among Christians in a Christian household, we can now no longer remember the day when we said, 'Our Father,' for the first time, just as little as we remember when, for the first time, we looked on father and mother. So much else changes and grows old, but 'Our Father' remains perpetually young; and instead of weakening with age, it gains in power and strength. So much else has played us false, but 'Our Father' has remained our trusty companion amid all life's changes and disappointments. They are the same words, indeed, that we say and hear again and again; and yet how they change their character, their form, as emphasis is laid on one or the other word! How it fits itself into our every day wants, while remaining essentially the same, ever borne up by these opening words, 'Our Father,' ever wrapped up in them as its true kernel. A higher wisdom we desire not than from year to year to learn to say, 'Our Father,' with ever increasing truth, understanding, and depth of feeling; and with no other prayer than this on our lips, do we desire at last to bow our head. Therefore do we thank Thee, gracious God, for our dear 'Our Father.' " \*

\* "THE WORLD OF PRAYER." By Dr. D. G. Monrad, Bishop of Lolland and Falstø, Denmark, pp. 153, 154.



### SECTION III.—FIRST PETITION.

“HALLOWED BE THY NAME.”

It has been remarked that there is an observable harmony between the Law given from Mount Sinai and the Lord's Prayer. The Son of God spoke the Ten Commandments with a loud voice, as the whole source of moral obedience; and Jesus taught the seven petitions of this prayer, including comprehensively all that we need to offer at the mercy-seat. As the first four precepts of the Decalogue have respect to God's character, authority, and glory, and declare our duty to Him, so the first three of the seven petitions concern our heavenly relation, and prescribe what we should first of all plead for when we draw near to God in prayer. We are taught impressively to lose sight of ourselves and to begin with God. Before we ask aught that immediately concerns ourselves—the supply of our temporal necessities, forgiveness of sin, preservation from temptation, and deliverance from evil—we are directed to plead for God's name being glorified, the coming of His kingdom, and universal obedience and submission to His will. Justly has it been remarked that He who teaches us to pray directs us to plead God first in our prayer, and to put self nowhere. In these three first petitions, *Thy*, *Thine* occur always, and *my* and *mine* are not found. We are thus taught that as we are sinful, worthless, and dying creatures, it is comparatively of little moment what we enjoy or suffer during the brief span of our

earthly existence; but it is all-important that God should be honoured and obeyed, that the Redeemer's kingdom should be universally established, and that men should be brought everywhere to know, obey, and submit to the Divine will on earth, as do the blessed inhabitants of heaven. Our primary duty in prayer is, therefore, disregarding ourselves, to put God first in all our thoughts, desires, and supplications.

This first, which has been termed “The Fundamental Petition,” asks in terms brief but most expressive, “Hallowed,” or sanctified “be Thy name.” This is, as our *Westminster Divines* explain, a prayer—“*That God would enable us and others to glorify Him in all that whereby He maketh Himself known, and that He would dispose of all things to His own glory.*” \* God's name—the object sought to be hallowed—is that whereby He is known and distinguished from all others. A name is frequently the brief summary of a person, by which his form and qualities, bodily and mental, are expressed. The man is known and present by his name. Thus often in the Scriptures, in all parts, the name of God is put for Himself and all His distinguishing characteristics. When Moses prayed, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,” and there was given him, in answer to the petition, such a discovery of His person as he was able to bear, he proclaimed the name of the Lord—“The Lord, or Jehovah, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty,” &c. †

\* *Shorter Catechism*, Quest. 70

† *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7.

Thus He exhibited Himself in His glorious essence and perfections, infinitely exalted above all creatures, eternal and unchangeable in righteousness, mercy, and compassion.

Again, faith in God, supreme and almighty, is commanded. “Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” \* The blessings of answered prayer are expressed when it is said—“The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.” † The “name” in the petition is Thou—such as Thou art revealed in Thy word, and illustriously displayed in Thy matchless works. Sometimes in the original the word Name is put alone, without the addition “of the Lord,” as in our version. “Whoso blasphemeth the name,” *i.e.*, of Israel’s God, “let him be put to death.” ‡

God’s name has been made known in many ways—in names and glorious titles, in attributes which belong to no creature, and which, like His nature, are infinite, eternal, and immutable;—in His works, which declare His greatness, wisdom, and goodness; in His holy and righteous law; in the gospel and its ordinances, and in His servants in all ages. Above all, Jesus the Saviour is, in the fullest sense, the name which is ever to be hallowed. Long before His advent in the flesh it was said of Him, as the angel sent to be the leader and guide of Israel, “My name is in Him.” § To the church of old He was revealed as Jehovah-Shalom, Jehovah-Jireh, Jehovah-Nissi, Jehovah-Zidkenu, “the Lord our righteousness.” The fulness of the Godhead is in

\* Isaiah li. 10.

† Psalm xx. 1.

‡ Lev. xxiv. 16.

§ Exodus xxiii. 21.

Him bodily, and all Divine perfections shine forth illustriously in His person and works. He came into world for this purpose, that He might manifest God's name to those who were given Him to be redeemed; and this is the grand design which He is exalted to accomplish in the whole world to the end of time, and throughout eternity. “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”\* All the features of the Father's character are seen in the face of Christ. He is “the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.” All the gifts of God are in Christ, and are dispensed by Him. The Divine purposes are revealed by Him, as He executes them all. He is the full revelation of God in Trinity; all that the separate Persons of the Godhead do in accordance with the plan of the eternal covenant in the work of human redemption and in the kingdom of providence, is effected by the sovereign grace and almighty power of the enthroned Mediator.

To *sanctify* Jehovah's name cannot mean to make it holy, for His name is holiness itself; and no creature can make anything internally pure or holy. We are enjoined to “sanctify the Lord God in our hearts,” and let Him be “our fear and our dread.”† We do this when we regard Him and deal with Him in the revelation which He has made of Himself, as the Holy Lord God that He is. His name is hallowed by us when we ascribe to Him all the excellences of His nature, and glorify Him continually. We cannot hallow God's name without regarding with interest, reverence, and delight all that by which He makes

\* John xvii. 26.

† 1 Peter iii. 15.

Himself known. His works show Him to be “girt about with might.” They are great, and to be sought out by every one who takes pleasure in them.\* He “magnifies His word above all His name;”† and it should be received, hid in the heart, and taken as the directory of the whole life and conduct. His ordinances are the appointments of His sovereign authority and the channels of His grace, and they are ever to be preserved “pure and entire,” and resorted to as “wells of salvation.” We are commanded to “hallow the Sabbath and reverence the sanctuary.” The saints who bear His name and reflect His image are to be regarded as the excellent of the earth, in whom all our delights should be placed. Above all, Christ and His salvation, that ever show forth the bright lustre and surpassing glory of the Father’s name, are to be honoured, loved, and sought after with the most intense desires and resolutions of the heart, and with the full bent and vigour of the life.

To show forth aright and glorify God’s name we must *know it* as revealed in His word and works. We need for this purpose the teaching of the Spirit, and should rest on and plead the promise, “My people shall know my name.” In hallowing God’s name we must constantly look by faith to Christ. The knowledge of God in Christ is not merely the means or the way of life; it is itself “life eternal,”‡ —the source, the essence, and support of spiritual life in the soul, and in its progress and perfection the crown and glory of the life of endless felicity. The experimental saving knowledge of Christ is the chief of the sciences—“the song and science of

\* Psa. cxi. 2.

† Psa. cxxxviii. 2.

‡ John xvii. 3.



eternity.” As we grow in the knowledge of Christ, we become like Him and in conformity to Him; we eminently glorify Him in our bodies and spirits which are His. God’s name is hallowed by us when we are jealous of His glory, and when we watch and pray against aught that would tarnish His glory, or withhold from Him aught of the homage that is His due. We should come before Him, and bring into His courts the offering which He requires. If we hallow His name aright, we consecrate ourselves willingly and all that we possess to His service, and to advance His glory in the earth. We abide in Christ, as living branches bearing fruit to His praise, and we “walk in the Spirit.” Thus we realise the promise—“I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in my name, saith the Lord.” \*

Finally, to offer aright this petition it is required that we should always, in our spirit and life, *show to others the excellency of the name of our God*; and that we should constantly seek in prayer that fellow-saints and all men should sanctify the name of our God, and that all the nations of the earth be filled with His glory. This is the high praise and thanksgiving of saints. “Extol the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.” † This is the revival and future victory of the church. “In our God’s name will we set up our banners, and the Lord fulfil all thy petitions.” ‡ And this will at length be the joy and blessing of the nations. “His name shall be great among the Gentiles.” “His name shall endure for ever; it shall be continued as long as the sun;

\* Zech. x. 12.

† Psalm xxxiv. 2.

‡ Psalm xx. 5.

men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.”\*

The terms of the petition imply that God Himself can alone fit and enable any to hallow His name aright. In offering it we virtually acknowledge “the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honour God aright,” and pray that “God would by His grace enable and incline us and others to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem Him, His titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.”† The verb is in the passive form, implying that none can of themselves in any wise sanctify God’s name aright. By nature none can know, acknowledge, and glorify God. It is only as they are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and God “works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure,” that they come to glorify Him with the soul and body which are His. Even the regenerate need supplies of grace continually to dispose and enable them to perform this great duty. When active in holiness they are but weak instruments. It is God the Spirit who works in them all and all. When Israel, God’s covenant people, “profaned His name,” He had “pity for His holy name,” and in wondrous condescension and high regard to His glory, He promises—“I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.”‡ Feeling how sadly we too have profaned God’s holy name, and how imperfect and sinful have been all

\* Malachi i. 11; Psalm lxxii. 17.

† *Larger Catechism*, Quest. 190. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 24.

our attempts to glorify it, we have need to plead with Him continually the fulfilment of His gracious promise that He Himself would sanctify His great name before all people.

Finally, we ask in this petition that God, “by His overruling providence, would direct and dispose of all things to His own glory.”\* Whatever men may do—whether believers succeed in their endeavours to hallow God’s name, or fail and come short of this duty, and whatever evil and opposition there be in the world, God Himself can make His name most holy and venerable by continually increasing and refulgent exhibitions of His glory. This will be the matter of our fervent desire, if we love His blessed name; and this, too, is the subject of our assured confidence and hope. Whatever He allots to us in the way of suffering and trial, and even our sins and falls—whatever be the afflictions and persecutions of His church, and all the doings of enemies in their pride and wrath, in the wickedness and rebellion of the nations, all these He can so restrain, direct, and overrule, that in the issue His name will be better known and universally exalted. The wrath of man He makes to praise Him, and the remnant of his wrath He restrains. All things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to His purpose. All nations shall fear Him; all ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; all kindreds of the nations shall render Him homage and willing subjection. God can and will dispose all things to His own glory, by His providence directing and overruling all human affairs, so that men shall see His uplifted

hand, and acknowledge and honour Him as the rightful sovereign of heaven and earth. He does this by mercies and judgments, by friends and enemies—making all human designs and efforts, whether voluntary or involuntary, instrumental in advancing His glorious ends, and in magnifying His great name. And by the diffusion of His word, and the work of His Spirit in the hearts of His saints, He will yet bring the church to be the joy of the whole earth, and all people to praise and exalt His name.

In hope of this blessed consummation, let us offer this prayer with more understanding and greater earnestness. “Thou who hast caused Thy glory to pass before us in Thy Son Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of Thy glory, and the express image of Thy person; Thou who hast caused Thy holy word to be written for our learning, that we might know Thee as Thou art, and walk ever in the light of Thy countenance, grant, we pray Thee, that we may ever remember Thee, and honour Thee, and reverence Thee, in thy truth and in Thy grace; and bring others, by our influence and our example, to seek Thee, and follow Thee likewise; and O grant that not here only or there, but throughout the universe of Thy creation, Thy name may be known and Thy glory manifested, so that the prophetic word may at last have its accomplishment—‘The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one.’” \*

\* *The Lord's Prayer.* By C. J. Vaughan, D.D., p. 47, 48.

## SECTION IV.—SECOND PETITION.

“THY KINGDOM COME.”

THIS second petition is the briefest and yet most comprehensive contained in the Lord's Prayer. It consists but of three words—*Thy kingdom come*. In the first petition we seek that God's honour and glory may be universally promoted; in this, having regard to the revealed way in which this will be effected, we pray that great systems which hinder the hallowing of God's name on earth may be overturned and removed, and that a powerful and magnificent organisation may be established, which shall secure that, to the widest extent, all honour and glory shall redound to God's name. The kingdom referred to is not Jehovah's universal supremacy over the world and all creatures—that which belongs to Him as Creator and possessor of heaven and earth; but that which is set up, after man had become apostate and rebellious—a kingdom gathered out of a fallen world, and from under the dominion of Satan, into a select society, the church, to which all opposing power is rendered subservient. The erection of this kingdom was designed in the decree of the blessed Trinity from eternity. It was revealed from the beginning, and set forth in bright promises and prophecies as the hope of the church, the joy and strength of believers in all ages. It has been all along the desire of holy angels and the expectation of saints, as from conflict and suffering they looked forward in hope to the kingdom of the Lord triumphant, and



their reigning with Him on earth and in heaven. The coming of the kingdom has been beautifully said to be “ the silent prayer of the whole creation, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.” All the saints from the beginning, in all their diversified circumstances of labour and trial, in life and death, have ever offered in public and private this emphatic petition, and its answer they have anticipated as that which will confer upon them the highest benefits and upon the world all blessing. The Redeemer upon His throne in glory is waiting for it; as He sits at the Father’s right hand, He is expecting till all His enemies become His footstool. The second petition, in its wide extent and fulness of meaning, has been said to be “ *a summary of the whole Scripture from Genesis to the Apocalypse.*”

To understand it aright we require to notice, 1, WHAT IS THE KINGDOM? 2, ITS COMING; 3, THE MEANS by which it may be expected to come.

1. This kingdom is *the sovereignty and dominion given to the Mediator* for the manifestation of the Divine glory in the salvation of elect sinners. While the whole universe is the empire of God, and “ this kingdom ruleth over all,” all power and authority in heaven and earth has been given to the Son. The throne of universal dominion is not abdicated by the Father, but is delegated to the Redeemer for the accomplishment of ends the most important and glorious. The “ kingdom of heaven,” so often spoken of by the Saviour during His personal ministry on earth, is that whose principles He reveals, whose laws He enacts, and over which He Himself rules as a sovereign prince, directing all its administration.

It may be viewed as *internal and spiritual*, in His

dominion in the hearts of His chosen people; and then as *external* and *visible*, in His government in the church and throughout the nations; and then as His *glorious kingdom* on earth and in heaven. Over all these departments Christ Jesus the Lord presides as a mighty prince. His character gives dignity to His rule, and shows its glory and excellency. He is the “mighty God,” the “Prince of peace.” He is “the King of glory,” as in His person He is the “only-begotten” of the Father; and the glory of all mediatorial offices and perfections is His. He is the living, life-giving, and exclusive Head of His church—the “Governor among the nations;” and upon His vesture and His thigh is inscribed the name, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Of this extensive kingdom He is the sole and exclusive Monarch. He shares His throne with no other. He must reign without a rival till He shall have put down all opposing power; and then will appear, in the bright effulgence of its glory, the kingdom of God under the government of the exalted Mediator.

The *internal* spiritual kingdom of God is that of His grace in human hearts. He calls men from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. He rescues them from the kingdom of Satan, which is that of darkness, idolatry, and sin. The spirit of power awakens and quickens them; and as He glorifies Christ in them,\* they submit to His sceptre of righteousness, and become His “willing people” in the day of power.† They have exchanged masters in yielding themselves to the Lord, and they never again return to the hard yoke of their former bondage. Henceforth “the kingdom of God is within

\* John xvi. 13.

† Psalm cx. 3.

them.”\* Christ reigns in their thoughts, affections, and desires. He bends and bows their will to His easy yoke, rules their conscience, “purged from dead works,” and controls and governs their whole life in leal allegiance to His authority and loving devotion to His service. Their joyful profession is, “The Holy One of Israel is our King.” “Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.”† Onward throughout the whole administration, “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”‡ How much do we need, in offering up this petition, ever to pray “that the kingdom of grace may be advanced” by the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of believers; “that we and others may be brought into it and kept in it” to the end!

Again, Christ’s external visible kingdom is the church in the earth. This is the kingdom which the God of heaven established like the “little stone,” seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, small and unnoticed in its beginning, but destined to become a great mountain and to fill the whole earth. It is like “the leaven,” spreading by its own internal power, and like the “grain of mustard-seed,” extending by increase and additions from without. The church is set up amid the nations of the earth for the purpose of gathering a people out of them, to enlighten and purify them, and ultimately to bring them all into subjection to the sceptre of righteousness. Christ Jesus organises this spiritual kingdom, enacts its laws, appoints its officers and ordinances, and ever reigns with supreme power and authority over it.

\* Luke xvii. 11.

† Psa. lxxxix. 18; Isa. xxxi. 13.

‡ Romans v. 21.

The church *invisible*, consisting of the children of God scattered abroad, is the seat of His gracious loving dominion. It is a "kingdom of priests," consecrated ones who serve at the altar, offering to God spiritual sacrifices continually, and they reign with Christ on the earth.

The *visible* church, in all its external ordinances and means of administration, is the kingdom of Christ. He alone is the exclusive Head of it; and no creature, however exalted, may usurp His sole prerogative. He institutes all its order and government, ordains its laws, provides for its extension and perpetuity, and administers the kingdom of nature and providence so as ever to subserve its interests. In the fullest sense this kingdom is *spiritual*. Its origin is from spiritual influence; its laws and censures—different from those which are merely human, which can only take account of the outward conduct, and are enforced by material means—constrain the conscience; and its ends are altogether spiritual—transformation of the moral nature, and bringing to perfection in spiritual life and power.

The external kingdom of Christ to come in the earth is His dominion as established Mediator over the nations, secured to Him by covenant-stipulation, and given Him as the reward of His finished work. This is His *subsidiary* kingdom. While He rules it for the manifestation of the glory of Godhead, He renders the whole administration subservient to the best interests of His redeemed church. He is "Head *over all things* to His church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."\* The spirit and principles of His spiritual kingdom are

\* Eph. i. 22,



intolerant of error and destructive of idolatry and sin. The kingdom of the stone in its onward progress “ *bruises and breaks in pieces* ” worldly powers ; and when it shall have become “ the kingdom of the mountains,” it shall fill the whole earth. The world-powers disappearing, “ the saints of the most high God take the kingdom and possess it,” and it shall stand for ever. Of this external dominion over the nations Christ Jesus the Mediator is the exalted sovereign. He rules the nations, giving them their origin, appointing their constitutions and laws, prescribing the qualifications of their rulers, claiming their subjection to His authority, and enforcing His claims by the rewards of obedience, and the righteous retributions of disobedience and rebellion. To Him it appertains, as “ King of nations,” to receive national homage and submission, and the adoration and service of earthly rulers. The great end to which all revolutions and changes that He orders and controls throughout the earth, is that men should everywhere be blessed in Him and call Him blessed ; that nations should bring their riches and glory to Zion, and that all people should honour and serve Messiah the Prince, to the glory of God the Father.

The last state of the kingdom for whose coming we pray is *the kingdom of glory*. This, besides the Redeemer’s universal dominion established in the latter day upon the earth, is “ the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour ” in heaven. When the present mediatorial dispensation shall have come to an end at the final judgment, then shall the kingdom of the Son be delivered up to the Father. The Mediator shall render the account of His administration, and shall present all the redeemed without



spot and blameless. The *form of the rule* will be changed; but still the Redeemer will be the Head of authority, and the Prince of life to all the saved. He shall reign over His saints, "the house of Jacob," for ever and ever, and "of His kingdom there shall be no end." Heaven is the place of the Saviour's glorious high throne. He appears there in regal dignity and unrivalled beauty, as "the King of glory." His saints see in full splendour His glory. They sit with Him on His throne as crowned conquerors and princes, and share with Him His glory. They are "the little flock," to which it is the Father's "good pleasure to give the kingdom."\* Each one is brought to the full possession of the inheritance of the saints in light; he is in the fullest sense an heir of salvation—an heir of heaven and all its fulness, an heir of God and of glory. In this petition we pray God that this "kingdom of glory may be hastened;" or, as in one of the Collects of the Church of England, that "*it may please Him to accomplish the number of His elect and to hasten His kingdom.*"

The *coming* of the kingdom in any of these aspects is all-important and most momentous. The spiritual kingdom coming to us internally implies that by nature we are outside of the kingdom, and that it must come to us, as we of ourselves are wholly unable to go into it. The King subdues us to Himself, and sets up His throne in our hearts. "The kingdom of God is within us." It is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The foundation of this gracious rule is the righteousness of Christ, made ours by imputation. The certain effect of this righteousness is peace through Christ; and the Spirit,

as “oil of gladness,” communicates Christ’s joy to our hearts, and makes our joy “full.” This kingdom set up within, imparts dignity and freedom. We reign with Christ on earth, and are brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The Son makes us free, and we are free indeed. The kingdom of grace in the soul is all-comprehensive and progressive. Christ reigns in and over the whole man, and all that we are and have belongs to Him. Our bodies are His, as He purchased them; and, recognising His sovereign authority, our members are yielded to Him as “instruments of righteousness.” Our mind and heart belong to the King. Our lives should be surrendered to Him in acts of willing obedience. He has paramount claims upon our property, our influence, and efforts; and when His kingdom comes to us in power these are freely devoted to Him. “Every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” is brought down, and every thought is brought into “captivity to the obedience of Christ.”\* How much and earnestly should we pray, as we say, “Thy kingdom come,” that outstanding sinners should be subdued by the sceptre of the King and rendered His willing people; and that within us that kingdom, which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” should be increased and fully established!

The EXTERNAL KINGDOM of Christ in the earth will come by the blessing upon the means Divinely appointed. The Bible is to spread throughout the nations, the gospel of the kingdom is to be preached to all people for a witness. The Holy Spirit is to be largely poured out, impelling the church to con-

\* 2 Cor. x. 5.

secrated effort, in supplying largely devoted missionaries and other plentiful means for the conversion of the world to Christ. Changes throughout the nations, judgments and providential overturnings, will be rendered subservient to the church's extension, and to the establishment of the Saviour's universal dominion. In the diligent use of ordained means it concerns us to labour, and pray, and spend for the coming of the power and glory of the kingdom; and as we witness changes in providence, and judgments poured out on the earth, we should lift up our heads and rejoice that the kingdom of God is at hand, and that Zion's redemption draweth nigh.

The offering up daily and hourly of this petition, in its comprehensive meaning, furnishes *a test of true godliness*. Justly has it been remarked that, "when there are professions but no genuine piety at heart, there is no interest excited for the coming of God's kingdom. The spiritual welfare of men, the honour and glory of Zion's King, have no place in the bosom of the man who liveth to himself. The charity of the Bible is stronger than the ties of humanity; it draws closer than all obstructions. It forms a bond of attachment to those who are far off as well as to those who are near. It is a sympathy which includes men of every class and clime, and will never be fully gratified until that bright day when the Son of David shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." \* When we present this petition we should endeavour to embrace in our thoughts and desires the number, wide extent, and excellence of the blessings which we seek, and the vast benefits

\* "The Mercy-Seat." By Gardiner Spring, D.D., p. 95, 96.

that will result to ourselves and others from their bestowment. These are comprehensively stated in the answer given in the “Larger Catechism” of the Westminster Divines, (Quest. 191)—“Acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate; that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed and made effectual to the converting of those who are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted; that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of His second coming, and our rejoicing with Him for ever; and that He would be pleased so to execute the kingdom of His power in all the world as may best conduce to these ends.”

Let us learn to pray more constantly and earnestly, “Thy kingdom come,” *in ourselves*. Let us seek that all vain thoughts, corrupt desires, rebel murmurings, worldly ambitions, may be mortified in us, and that there may be established in us that spiritual kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We should go in to the King and ever plead, “Lord, reign supreme in me; over my appetites, passions, and lusts. Be King in my heart, that I may ever hate all sin, perfectly love Thee, and devotedly serve Thee.” Let us offer the petition in the true spirit of Christian missions, and with the true desires of Christian patriotism and benevolence. If the church felt aright its full force



and importance, then would there be a large dedication of men and means for the evangelisation of the nations of the earth. If we ourselves are unfit to go and labour for the conversion of the heathen, we should be impelled by our daily prayer to work for the salvation of sinners at home. If we keep alive at home the spirit of grace and supplication, we shall be led to earnest and persevering labour. “To pray is to toil.” When “instant in prayer,” we shall feel ourselves in the missionary field co-workers with all who, in any place, are labouring for the coming of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and rejoicing in the sure prospect of its ultimate universal establishment.

And, finally, we are called, as we offer this petition day by day, to pray for the coming to ourselves of *the kingdom of glory*; to ask that our title may be sure and our witness complete for entering heaven; to seek that all sin may be purged away, that spiritual enemies may be overcome, that we may obtain grace to die happy, and may have “ministered to us abundantly an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”\* How fervently should we plead, like the dying malefactor to the crucified Saviour, “Lord, remember me, now that Thou art in Thy kingdom.” Thus praying, we will wait for His coming from heaven to give us, from His own hand, the “crown of righteousness,” and to bid us welcome to His fulness of joy. Then shall we know perfectly the riches, the glory, and the blessedness of His kingdom come, for ever and ever.

\* 2 Peter i. 11.



## SECTION V.—THIRD PETITION.

“ THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN  
HEAVEN.”

THIS most comprehensive petition contains the whole of practical religion, and all the happiness that flows from it; and with its answer is intimately connected the future glory that shall fill the whole earth. Jehovah's will, which expresses His supreme, absolute authority, may be regarded in a twofold light,—as His fixed purpose, which is unfolded in His providence, and as His revealed will in law. The former includes all that God intends to take place; the latter is our rule of action, declaring our obligation to obey whatever is commanded and revealed. As God's will, in every aspect, is holy and wise and good, we may and ought to desire that “ His counsel should stand, and that He would do all His pleasure.” But the petition mainly or altogether respects God's *preceptive will*—that of which vast multitudes on the earth are wholly ignorant, and which many to whom it is revealed disregard and trample under foot. As the revelation of God's will to His rational, accountable creatures is a high privilege, so obedience and submission to it is their great duty and highest attainment, and the only way in which they may expect to enjoy blessing and happiness. As in the opening of the prayer, in saying, “ Our Father in heaven,” we are taught to look away from earth to heaven, so in this petition heaven appears nearly connected with earth. The course of holy obedience

and submission, in two spheres of action, is represented as one. The spirit and conduct of the blessed inhabitants of the upper world are exhibited as the model for constant imitation in the lower.

In the Gospel of Luke the words of the petition are put briefly—“Thy will be done in heaven, so in earth.” They teach us to know, obey, and submit to God’s will in all things, as angels and glorified saints do in heaven.\* We herein ask that by God’s grace we may be brought to know God’s will. Even with the light and full revelation of the way of duty contained in the Scriptures, we need Divine teaching to enable us to know aright the way of God’s commandments, the spirituality and obligation of God’s precepts, and the nature and ends of holy obedience. Considering how dark are our minds, how limited are our understandings, and how imperfect and defiled our best duties, we need to look away from ourselves, and have before us a model of holy obedience, which we should aim to transcribe in our spirit and life. The key to the petition is the desire expressed of imitation of the glorified inhabitants of heaven. We go to God, feeling that of ourselves we are insufficient to perform any duty aright; and that, in our best services, we offend and come short of His glory; and we ask Him, by His almighty grace, to enable us by working in us “to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Saints and angels in heaven know God’s will, and yet they ever desire to look into it, to see and admire its mysteries, and to know more of its infinite wisdom and goodness. So ought we to contemplate with concentrated gaze the wonders

\* *Shorter Catechism*, Quest. 103.

contained in God's law, and take delight in holy obedience. These blessed beings obey the Divine behests *sincerely, cheerfully, and universally*. They regard every prohibition and precept with reverence and love. "With twain they do fly," readily engaging in any service to which they are commanded, however difficult or self-denying. Theirs is a loving, implicit, unreserved obedience; it ever presents these prominent features. It is holy; and they know and desire to know no *loving* government but that of the Divine will; and it they recognise as infinitely wise and good, and account it their highest honour and privilege to do and submit to it. This service they perform in all its parts, and in the consecration to it of all their powers. With holy alacrity and cheerfulness the dwellers in glory do the will of the heavenly King. Their service is one of perpetual thanksgiving and exulting praise. There is no cessation or weariness in the ministrations in heaven. "They rest not day or night," serving God in His temple. The strength and vigour of their faculties, instead of being abated, expand and increase through continual employment in the ennobling service. Love is the constraining power of obedience in heaven, and perfect holiness its element. The will of God is done by angels and glorified saints in heaven *perfectly and for ever*. Dwelling with God, seeing Him, and being perfectly assimilated to Him, there is no room for wandering thoughts, vain desires, or unexecuted purposes. There is no weariness, declension, or satiety in the work of the upper sanctuary. The whole thoughts and desires of the soul are concentrated on this one great object, and satisfied with God as its portion for ever; there is experienced unspeakable, overflow-

ing, unraptured delight to eternity in the work of sinless, perfect obedience. Seeing His face, their obedience, though implicit, is not blind.

We pray, moreover, in this petition, to be enabled to *submit* to God's will as well as to do it after a heavenly manner. This is to recognise His sovereign right to direct and dispose of us according to His good pleasure; to appoint all our afflictions and trials, to place us in any station that He sees fit, to limit the term of service and trial, and bring out of them what is accordant with His holy and gracious purpose. Angels and saints in glory, in their higher sphere, manifest continually this entire perfect submission. They recognise sovereign wisdom and infinite goodness in all that is appointed for them, and they go anywhere to perform the service prescribed for them. They would not, even if they could, have anything otherwise than it is in the Divine appointment. So should we always recognise a Father's love and a Father's hand in the allotment to us of trials and sufferings, of losses, afflictions, and bereavements. The will of our heavenly Father towards His children is ever the best. He is too wise to do aught at random or without a designed gracious end, and too loving to do aught harsh or untender.

Let us seek the Spirit, that we may learn to pray this prayer, and to have it embodied in our whole life and spirit. We should ever, renouncing the will of the flesh, and resigning ourselves to God, and casting away all that is sinful and defiling, yield ourselves to active, devoted obedience, and to unreserved submission. We should ask that, receiving the influence promised from above, we may be entirely submissive and obedient, and altogether one



with the Divine will. In all life's work we should ever pray, "Teach me to do Thy will;" and in painful trials and afflictions we should say from the heart, as the suffering Saviour, "Not my will, but Thine be done." "The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" It is God alone who can inspire good thoughts, and can lead us to form right purposes. We should therefore beware of living on our own understanding, but should "roll our way on God," trusting Him to direct our steps. For all that is spiritually good we need to ask God continually to "work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure," as we should seek from Him that guidance, and support, and blessing in providence in the affairs of life which alone lead to the desired issue. Besides inspiring our thoughts and swaying and leading the will, God assigns to each individual His work and talent. Only as He gives to feel the responsibility—as He enlarges the heart, and assists to occupy it aright, can we be found faithful, and reap the reward. Should we not therefore pray daily, and live always in the spirit of the petition, "Thy will, O God, be done *by* me, as well as *in* me."

The obedience and submission of Christ to the Father's will is a higher standard of our obedience and submission than that of angels and glorified saints. In it we see heaven brought down to earth, and we learn conformity to the all-perfect model of holy living and patient suffering. He engaged in covenant from eternity to obey and suffer and die. His whole work on earth was one of loving, free, delighted obedience to the Father's will; and He "*learned obedience*" by the things which He suffered. He lived by faith, served in love, and suffered in



patience and hope. His whole life was consecrated to the performance of His work of Surety-obedience. In the exercise of all holy graces, He accomplished to the last the work of a bond-servant; and in meek and perfect submission, in His last dread sufferings in Gethsemane and on the cross, He submitted, even amid the shrinking of His humanity, to the fearful infliction of Divine wrath. He exclaimed—"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," while He actually drank and exhausted the cup of trembling given Him, surcharged as it was with all the elements of the Divine wrath and curse. As we offer this petition, let us ever look to the Prince of sufferers. Let us consider Him who learned obedience in the way of full submission, "by the things which He suffered," and who is now become "the Author of eternal salvation" "to all them who obey Him." In seeking conformity to Christ we become associated with angels and saints in heaven, who, in all their service, behold His face, and are satisfied with His likeness and glory.

In frequently presenting this comprehensive petition we should reflect that the doing of God's will would produce a high degree of happiness on earth as it does in heaven. This is the grand consummation to which the world looks forward—the blessed end of the mediatorial dispensation. This is the high object which the enthroned Redeemer has before Him in all His dispensations in providence and grace. When men are renewed and made holy by the sanctification of the Spirit, they are made happy and become a blessing to others. As true religion progresses, ignorance and vice are banished. Disorder and tumult and wars cease throughout the earth. Wrathful judgments are removed. The

world of nature is renewed again, and the bloom of Eden is restored. Social happiness and joy prevail. Meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, and love sweeten and elevate human fellowship. The earth yields her increase; the nations are glad and rejoice. And when their rulers and people are brought to know, obey, and submit to God's will revealed in the Bible and exemplified in Christ, these "first heavens and earth" are not remembered; there shall be "a new heavens and earth, wherein shall perpetually dwell righteousness."

While we look forward to this assured, blessed hope, we should be deeply humbled on account of our having so little known God's will, and so imperfectly done and submitted to it. It behoves us to confess and mourn over manifold sins of omission and commission. We should learn, too, from the daily use of this petition, lessons of the deepest and most solemn import. We condemn ourselves in the Divine presence if we live indolently and selfishly, and if we are impatient and unsubmitive in trial and affliction. We may gather from it strength for a life of holiness and active effort and abounding love. As we look to the world above, and behold it inhabited by blessed spirits, our companions and fellow-worshippers, now one in spirit with saints on earth, and think that we will ere long be their associates in God's glorious presence for ever, we may take comfort in all our sorrows, and rejoice exceedingly that our redemption draweth nigh. In the words of an eminent youthful martyr,\* we may exclaim—"I shall soon be above these clouds; and then shall I see Thee and enjoy Thee, O my Father, without intermission for ever and ever."

\* James Renwick.

## SECTION VI.—FOURTH PETITION.

“GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.”

THIS is the one petition in the Lord's Prayer which respects *temporal* blessings; and from the position which it occupies, as well as the terms employed, it teaches us most important lessons. In this comprehensive summary of daily prayer there is but one petition for temporal benefits, while there are six concerning those which are spiritual, thus showing the transcendent value and importance of the latter above the former. Then we are instructed to offer those about the things that concern God's glory before we ask aught directly for ourselves, either the bread required to sustain life, or the forgiveness of sin, or deliverance from temptation and evil of every kind. The first three petitions, properly viewed, respect *the end* for which man lives—the glory, kingdom, and service of God; the others relate to the *means* by which he lives—the body, by supplies of food convenient; the soul, by the pardon of sin, deliverance from temptation, and escape from evil of every kind. It has been observed, too, that the first half of the prayer begins with heaven, and comes down to man serving His Father on earth. The latter half commences with man here, and rises from corporeal needs, and ascends gradually heavenward from weakness and want, till all evil of every kind has been removed, and the suppliant is brought from the well and streams on earth to the unfathomable and inexhaustible fountain in heaven.

The *terms* of the petition deserve to be noticed.

“Give us this day our daily bread,” or more fully, according to the expressive order in the original, “Our bread, our daily (bread), give us to-day.” Luke gives it, “day by day.” The thing asked is “*bread*,” by which is meant not only the food that is required to sustain animal life, but also supplies of raiment, and of whatever else is requisite for our condition and relation in this world. The expressive term stands for all necessary, temporal support—food, clothing, dwelling place, health, mental vigour, support and success in pursuits. It is “*our bread*,” that which is a suitable portion for us; which becomes ours through honest industry, and is not designed for ourselves alone, but which we willingly share with others by unselfish and generous communication. This gift which we seek from our heavenly Father is designated by an epithet of somewhat doubtful and difficult meaning—“*Daily bread*.”\* It has been rendered “*super-substantial*,” and the *vulgate* and some other ancient versions assign to it this meaning. This, which would restrict the supply sought to a spiritual supply, is taken advantage of by Romanists to afford sanction to the dogma of transubstantiation. The epithet has again been taken to mean “*sufficient*” or convenient food. And, adverting to the literal meaning of the compound Greek word, it has been explained, “bread for to-morrow.” As the Hebrew day began with the evening, and reached from sunset to sunset,

\* This epithet, which has sometimes been termed “*the rack of theologians*,” occurs only here in the original Scriptures, and is not to be found in the remains of Greek literature. *Chrysostom* says it is a word “coined by the two evangelists.”



the petition would be thus a request for the support and refreshment of the day coming, and in some sense already entered upon. "Our bread for the coming day give us to-day." The slight variety of expression in the terms used by the two evangelists has been noticed, as when compared and combined, giving force and emphasis to the petition. Matthew has it simply, "give," as if bestowed readily at once; Luke, "day by day," meaning *give on, continually*. The one has regard to the promptitude and sufficiency of God's supply; the other to the Divine patience in giving, and to the trust which we cherish for needed provision for the morrow if it comes.

The petition leads us in thought and heart to recognise God as the *great and only giver*. The necessities of life we cannot acquire of ourselves, and no creature can of itself supply them. The world has nothing to give; and Satan, though he largely promises, only holds out baits and snares. God, as the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth, has all things that we can possibly need, and He is ever ready to communicate. Of His goodness He gives life to His creatures, when He calls them into existence; and in His providence He is continually giving. "The eyes of all things wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."\* God is constantly giving, and waits on us all the day for this purpose. He gives simply for the asking, and most liberally. His gifts are "good things," and He is ready to bestow on the evil and the good. He delights in

\* Psalm cxlv. 15, 16.



giving, and He never withdraws or takes back the gifts which He has conferred. We should ever think of God, to whom we address the petition, as the All-bountiful giver in providence and grace. All that we receive are gifts from heaven, by whatever hands they are ministered to us. Not only for the bread that perisheth have we encouragement to look to God, but we should be ever anxious to receive and appropriate by faith His unspeakable gift. He is infinitely more ready to bestow the gift of His own Son to needy, perishing sinners than we are to ask and receive it from His hands. Let us learn to pray continually, "Lord, give,"—trusting and hoping in Him as our loving, condescending Father, who perfectly knows all our wants, and is ready at all times fully to supply them.\*

The gift which we are taught to seek is *bread*. By using the brief monosyllable as the comprehensive designation of all temporal supplies, we are shown the exuberance of the Divine bounty, and the mystery of God's goodness and condescension in the provision made for the wants of His creatures. In whatever way bread, the staff of life, is furnished, it is by a series of great wonders in the economy of nature and providence. The production of different kinds of grain and vegetables, the regulation of seasons, the influence of temperature, and the assimilation of food to the bodily functions so as to afford nourishment, all show that God alone is able to minister to any the needed provision. The like marvels of Divine wisdom and goodness are seen in

\* Luther at one time interpreted the petition as a request for the "bread of heaven," spiritual nourishment; but he afterwards saw cause to explain it as referring to the supply which God gives for temporal wants.

furnishing to us all else that our earthly condition requires,—our clothing, dwellings, health, relations, and situations in life. All these are to God's people His good gifts to them through Christ. Out of the line of His common providence He bestows on them earthly supplies, as new covenant blessings, and as taken from under the curse. They are the "all things" which are promised to be added to spiritual benefits, when they seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. They are put into the hands of the Mediator to dispense to the heirs of promise. When He was on earth, He opened His hand liberally, and frequently wrought miracles of goodness and mercy to supply the temporal necessities of the multitudes that waited on His ministry. Now that He has ascended to heaven, and hath all things put under Him, and the stars of the universe entrusted to His dispensation, we may not doubt that He is ready to relieve the wants, of whatever kind they be, of all who look to Him. He is Himself the Bread of Life sent down from heaven. The bodies which He redeemed by His blood, in which He dwells as in temples by His Spirit, He will supply with food convenient; and as, in the fullest sense, He is our life, we may always come to Him, and trust Him to confer what is good, and that He will withhold no good thing. He gives to them through channels opened at the cross. The curse is partly removed from the earth by the atonement, and will be fully taken away hereafter.

Again, the petition directs us to ask from God *our* bread, not merely temporal good things for ourselves, but likewise for many others in the common brotherhood of humanity, and in the fellowship of the household of faith. If we come to God, as children to

their Father in heaven, for needed supplies, we are at the same time to recognise the brotherly relation to fellow-men. We should think of the poor and needy, sympathise with them in their privations and trials, present their cases to God in prayer, and be ready to share with them the gifts which He bestows on us in ministering to their necessities. When we ask in prayer *our* daily bread we virtually declare that if God will grant the request, we shall imitate His goodness in being ourselves givers. It expresses our desire and aim to know the words of the Lord Jesus—“It is more blessed to give than to receive,” that which His whole life on earth and His death for sin exemplified.

Then we ask for a *daily* supply of temporal wants. “Give us day by day our daily bread.” We have no store entrusted to our own keeping for the future, either of temporal or spiritual blessings; and we should come as beggars for both every day, to the throne of grace. Our bodies and minds are liable to continual changes; our outward state and circumstances are varied from day to day. God alone can provide for our wants as they arise, and against the new evils that befall us as they come. Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things. He is ever nigh and accessible to us, and He constantly and lovingly cares for us. As we should walk with Him daily, so may we, with childlike hope and confidence, go to Him and tell Him about all we need, in the assurance that He will hear us, and that hearing us we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

We are to ask our daily bread from God *in the use of all lawful means*. In the language of the *Larger Catechism*, “We pray for ourselves and others, that

both they and we, waiting on the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may, of His free gift and as His fatherly wisdom shall see best, enjoy a competent portion of the outward blessings of this life." If we look for the gift from God, we are not to expect it as the bread of idleness; nor that it may be used in the indulgence of prodigality and sinful pleasure; nor to spend it for selfish ends, withholding from the Giver the glory, and without regard to the benefit of others. It is to be enjoyed in the way of wise forethought, sustained industry, self-denied frugality, and generous compassion and liberality. God alone, who ministers of His bounty our daily supplies, orders the lot of His people, assigns them their relations and employments in society, gives them strength to labour, and blesses them with success in their pursuits, and contentment in whatever condition He is pleased to place them. When we pray and labour for temporal good things, we only do this aright when we seek first and chiefly spiritual blessings; for these, we are taught, are bestowed as *supplementary* to the kingdom of God and His righteousness, which His people are mainly to seek.\* It has been a common observation of believers, in all ages and circumstances, that the more they have been led to pray and labour for the things of the kingdom, the more they have been freed from distracting cares about the things of this present life, and the more manifest blessing they have enjoyed upon the relations, pursuits, and trials allotted to them in life. We are to ask temporal blessings from God, too, in a manner different from the way in which we pray for spiritual blessings.



The latter are held out to us in absolute and unconditional promises; and we may therefore plead for them without limitation, and taking no denial. In seeking the former, we must cherish entire submission to God's will; pleading that He would give or withhold, as far as will be for His own glory and our good. Here, especially, we "know not what to pray for as we ought;" and we should ask the Spirit to help our infirmity, both as respects the matter and the mode of prayer.

The *practical lessons* which this petition furnishes are weighty and of vast importance for the whole spirit and conduct of life. We are impressively taught that we are *altogether dependent on* God for the supply of all our temporal wants, and for all guidance in life. He is the great first cause; and we are to look to Him above all secondary causes in which we are ever prone to rest and lose ourselves. He is the sole preserver of man and beast, and in and from Him we have life and breath, and all things. God's providence extends to all His creatures—the least as well as the greatest; and to all their actions, the most minute and trivial, equally as the most important. God's sufficiency is boundless and inexhaustible, while every creature is wholly insufficient to supply good to itself, or to minister it to any other. Creatures are to us only what God makes them. The personal experience of all human beings bears the same uniform testimony, that they have been absolutely, at every moment, dependent on an all-wise, over-ruling providence for all that has befallen them, whether prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, life or death. In all cases, what we receive of temporal things is the *free* gift of God. The rich equally with the poor give nothing to God for what



they receive from His hands. All is bestowed, like the rain and dew of heaven, of His "great liberality," and there is no remuneration given to the Author of the blessing. The gift is wonderfully enhanced when we consider it conferred upon them in answer to the prayers of God's people, asking daily bread not only for themselves, but for the whole family of mankind, as they pray, "Give us *our* daily bread." However this be, the excellency of the gift is strong, as it is given to us as *sinful* beings, and as it comes to us through Him who is "the true bread from heaven," and who shed His precious blood for the life of the world. The daily petition for temporal supplies teaches us *humility*. We neither have life nor aught that supports and comforts it of ourselves. As needy beggars, we require to come and ask them daily from God, the giver of all good. The rich and mighty need, equally with the poor and famishing, to seek from Him bread, the staff of life. What we are taught to ask is not the costly things that minister to human pride and ambition, but bread that perisheth. We are instructed to ask this daily, because by using it, it is gone; and we are made to feel the continual necessity of a daily and hourly renewal of all creature supports and comforts. In one aspect we are assimilated to the lower animals, and the temporal provision which we require is for the supply of our sensual appetites. We are creatures of a day, having "our habitation in the dust, and are consumed before the moth." Even when we approach God as "our Father in heaven," and look for the supply of our temporal wants through the mediation of Christ, it behoves us to acknowledge that we are "not worthy of the

least of all God's mercies ;" \* that we have forfeited all right to the creatures by sin, and that we are, at all times, undeserving of " the crumbs that fall from the Master's table." †

The prayer strongly inculcates *moderation* and *contentment*. We ask not luxuries but necessities. " Having food and raiment," we should therefore " be content," though our fare be scanty, our clothing plain and mean, and our earthly lot with the afflicted and lowly. Nature is content with little. Both Scripture and experience concur in teaching the lesson that " a man's life," neither its continuance, nor usefulness, nor happiness, " consists in the abundance of the things he possesses." What is received as a gift from the Father's hand, enjoyed with His blessing and employed for His glory, is a portion better than all earthly riches and honour. Would we come to God in prayer careful for nothing, and letting each day care for itself, the trials and sorrows of life would be lightened, and its enjoyments enhanced and sweetened. We do not offer this petition aright if we are repining or covetous, or if we " haste to be rich." The affluent should learn the same lesson of moderation and contentment as those in humble life. Wealth can only be a curse to the possessor if God is not acknowledged in bestowing it, and if that is spent for pride and luxury which should be freely given in charity. In the language of *John Howard*, the philanthropist, " Our superfluities must give place to our brother's necessities." We should be ever aware of the temptations and dangers of earthly prosperity; and, as we ask our daily bread, learn to moderate our desires

\* Gen. xxxii. 10.

† Matt. xv. 27.

and expectations. We are taught by inspired wisdom to pray—"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me."\* The direction of *Lord Bacon*, however little he followed it in his own conduct, is ever worthy of practical observance by those who have outward prosperity—"Seek not proud wealth, but such as thou mayest get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly."

In looking to God for *guidance, support, and comfort* in life, we must seek the benefit by the means which He approves, and in the way that we may expect His blessing. This bars us from entering into relations in life without having a single eye to His glory, from engaging in sinful pursuits, and from following any business that requires us to neglect any duty, or to break God's law. The trade in intoxicating drink, the opium traffic, and the various employments that are carried on by systematic Sabbath-breaking, are plainly opposed to asking from God our daily bread, and cannot be engaged in with the expectation of the blessing from above.

The petition, finally, teaches us *trustful confidence* and *large-hearted benevolence*. We have the strongest ground of trust that the supplies which we need shall be given from the character of our heavenly Father, who always pities His children, knows what they need before they ask, and who is never tired in giving. His promises, exceeding great and precious, even about temporal good things, are ample security. What is good the Lord will give, and will withhold no good from them that fear Him. His people's

\* Prov. xxx. 8.

“bread shall be given, and their water made sure.”  
 “As their day, so shall their strength be.”\* The faith of saints may at times be tried sorely in relation to outward things, and they may be in difficulties about supplies of daily bread, guidance and support in business, health, continuance and comfort in life. In all such cases, we have ground of stable and unfailing confidence in the provision of the covenant, which is “ordered in all things and sure,” if we trust in the Lord and do good. Amid all possible changes and trials, we “shall dwell in the land, and verily be fed.”† Out of the riches of His fulness in Christ Jesus, our God will supply all our need.”‡ “The Lord God is a sun and shield, who will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.”§

The petition teaches us most impressively to rise above all *selfish feelings*—to ask, in our daily prayers, for the poor and needy, to be ever ready to minister from God’s gifts to us to their outward necessities. It will be our greatest honour, as it is our high obligation, to imitate God by being constant givers. This is the best expression of faith in our heavenly Father, and the clearest evidence of love to Him. Thus, too, gifts from His hand, in answer to prayer, are enhanced and largely increased. What we keep to ourselves, and withhold from Christ’s cause and poor, we lose; and, on the other hand, what we freely give up, in the spirit of love, we treasure up in heaven and gain for ever. Well has it been said—  
 “When we come to die, we possess only what we gave away; we must leave what we endeavoured to

\* Deut. xxxiii. 25.      † Ps. xxxvii. 3.      ‡ Phil. iv. 19.  
 § Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

keep. Whatever gifts of kindness, of sympathy, of brotherly aid, of self-sacrifice we bestowed during our lifetime remains to us an eternal treasure in heaven, where moth cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." \* Thus should we learn constantly, in humility, confidence, and hope, to ask from our Father in heaven our daily bread. Abounding gratitude for gifts which we continually receive from His hands will make us peaceful and joyous. We become more and more happy, as we cherish the sense of our dependence, and love Him because He heard the voice of our prayers. We return to Him as our "quiet rest," and learn to look beyond the scene of earthly wants and trials to "the rivers of pleasure," and "fulness of joy" at God's right hand for evermore.

\* Saphir—"Lectures on the Lord's Prayer," p. 274.



## SECTION VII.—FIFTH PETITION.

“FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.”

THE fifth petition is intimately connected with the fourth, the conjunction *and* being full of meaning. The one expresses *wants* which we carry to God, and ask Him to give for their supply; the other declares *sins*, and seeks that He would *forgive* them. If in the former we are reminded that we are *creatures* needing continually gifts from the Creator to sustain us, in the latter we acknowledge that we are *sinner*s, absolutely requiring forgiveness for favour and acceptance. The gifts of providence, such as health, relations, and riches, are no real blessings to us, if, as children of wrath, we remain under condemnation—if we are not subjects of pardoning grace.

It has been properly said that God is most gloriously displayed as a bountiful giver when He pardons our iniquities, and casts our sins behind His back. The gift of pardon includes all others. In the opening of the hundredth and third Psalm, when we stir up all that is within us to bless the Lord for all His gracious benefits, we celebrate, first of all, His pardoning mercy—“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;” and we trace to this all the subsequent blessings which we receive at His hand. When we ask daily bread for our bodies, we seek forgiveness as the much-needed provision for our souls, without which we have no spiritual life, and can know no substantial or enduring good. While this petition

is an indispensable accompaniment of that which precedes it, it differs from it in several important respects. Of the bread that perisheth we ask a *daily* supply, whereas when we refer to our sins, we seek forgiveness for all the past in our whole lifetime. And we enforce the prayer for pardon by expressing a pledge that we shall show mercy to fellow-sinners—thus presenting a test of the state of our hearts, and exhibiting the fruit of forgiveness to ourselves. The petition is expressed in the fullest terms, and is designed to be the daily prayer of all. All are sinners in God’s sight, and need continually the outgoing of pardoning mercy. It is certainly a sad and grievous mistake of some sectaries, in our day, to affirm that believers need not, and should not, offer this petition for forgiveness for themselves, inasmuch as they have been already fully forgiven, either when Christ died eighteen hundred years ago, or in the act of justification. While it may be admitted that there is a difference between the first cry of the awakened, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” and the prayer of the believer for forgiveness, yet daily confession and pleading for pardon are enjoined and exemplified in the Scriptures as distinguishing believers so long as they remain in life. The Psalmist, who rejoiced in God graciously forgiving him all his sin, at the same time confessed that “iniquities prevailed against him,” and pleaded that God would blot out all his transgressions, and hide His face from his sin. When in justification the believer obtains a *legal* pardon, and the guilt of sin blotted out completely and for ever, he needs afterwards a *daily pardon* for multiplied transgressions against his gracious Father. Cleansed by the blood of Christ, through the first act of faith, he needs, by

the same blessed provision, the washing of his "feet," and the continual renewal of pardon, with its intimation to His conscience. It is true universally and equally of believers as of others—"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8).\*

There are two principal divisions of the petition—

I. The Request—"Forgive us our debts;" and

II. The *test* or fruit—"as we forgive our debtors."

I. The REQUEST.—This is put in two most forcible and expressive words—"Our debts" and "forgive." In the form given by the evangelist Luke, the phrase is "forgive us our sins." What is *debt* in one aspect is *sin* in another, and both are strongly expressive. The original term for sin denotes "*missing the mark*," or "*failure*." "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." How greatly have we failed of what we might have been to God, to ourselves, to our generation! How certainly and sadly do we miss the mark of the high end of life—to glorify God in all things, and to enjoy Him now and for ever! The petition involves a deep

\* "Is it possible for a believer not to confess his sins unto God, and ask His pardon? As some one has said, 'Even if God did not know all, I would tell Him all.' (Eugénie de Guérin). Love cannot be silent. Love must acknowledge sin, not to itself merely, but to the Loved One against whom sin is committed. Love must ask a renewal of God's favour. Love cannot rest on a remembered pardon—on a title, dead as it were, however sure and perfect that may be. Love seeks a present living God; not in doubt, in the spirit of bondage, but in the trustful and loving *spirit of adoption*, we ask our heavenly Father to forgive our debts."—*Saphir on the "Lord's Prayer,"* p. 280.

sense of sin in all things, with its manifold and great aggravations, contrition of heart on account of it, and fervent desire to be delivered from its condemning guilt and power. \* Sin, for which we seek forgiveness, is figuratively called “debts.” It is an offence against God, demanding reparation to His dishonoured claims, as the human debtor is

\* “Our forgetfulness of sin does not obliterate or annul it. Guilt is here expressly called our debt; perchance *to guard us against that very neglect and oblivion*. Just as a debt to our fellow-citizen becomes only the more large in its amount and the more ruinous in its enforcement by our want of memory and exactness as to meeting it; just as the pecuniary burden of debt is easily contracted, and the money which it won is often frivolously wasted on trifles and toys of transient value—so we sin easily, to reckon for our sin one day most surely and most sorely. In our times the cankerous mortgage left undischarged gradually grows until it eats out the entire heritage, and forfeits for the reckless tenant the home of his childhood, and poisons and kills often the whole energy and enterprise and hopefulness of the unhappy debtor. And of old, debt perilled not merely the property but the liberty; and, in Rome, even the very life of the man indebted. Even thus our guilt, unconfessed, unrepented, and unforgiven, left slowly to grow with growing years and growing worldliness and growing unbelief, is mortgaging our happiness, our spiritual freedom, and our eternal life; and will soon, ‘eating as doth a canker,’ rob us of all hope of heaven, and sell us to that land of exile and durance whose wretched dwellers hear no trump of jubilee inviting them back to the forfeited inheritance—*forfeited once and forfeited for ever*. Whilst ‘we are in the way,’ then we do well to conciliate ‘our adversary,’ lest he in justice ‘deliver us to the judge,’ and the judge consign us to the prison-house of endless despair;—that prison, whose bolts once drawn to enclose us, rust, never to be drawn back, and the hinges of whose gates, once closed on the guilty, never turn more to permit their ogross to hope, and peace, and heaven.”—*Williams* —“Lectures on the Lord’s Prayer,” p. 142, 143.



required to satisfy the legal claim of his creditor. We have violated God's holy and just law; we have incurred its penalty; we are verily guilty, and God alone can forgive us, as none but the creditor can forgive the debtor. Frequently did the Saviour, in His personal ministry on earth, exhibit this view of the nature of sin, and the necessity of obtaining forgiveness from God alone; as in Matthew v. 25, 26, the parable of the creditor and the two debtors; and in Luke vii. 41; and that of the unmerciful debtor, Matthew xviii. 23.

The only ground on which we can expect forgiveness is *through the atonement of Christ*. This is not expressly mentioned in the petition, for at the time that the Lord's Prayer was dictated the great sacrifice for human sin had not been offered. But from the beginning there was only revealed one way of salvation—one method of Divine forgiveness. This which was shadowed in types, declared in prophecies, and believed and embraced by saints of old, was by the blood of expiation. For "His name's sake," for "His mercy's sake," God pardoned the sins of His people, and He thus ever had regard to the satisfaction to be rendered to His law and justice by the sinner's Substitute. The Mediator became Surety for His people. In fulfilling the stipulations of the covenant He took their vast debt upon Him; and in His sufferings and death He paid it to the last farthing. The demands of infinite justice were fully met; the law was magnified and made honourable; and "the Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake." Not on the footing of mercy alone, but on that too of justice, infinite and inflexible, we are now encouraged to ask and expect forgiveness of sin. "If we confess our sins,



He is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John i. 9). The sum and substance of the gospel lie in the substitution of Christ, and in the doctrine of expiation through His blood. Here, too, is the ground of the firmest, surest hope for the convinced penitent sinner. His vast debt is fully paid, and the payment is accepted on His behalf, so that there can be no second demand. The justice as well as the mercy of God claims the full and perpetual acquittal of all for whom the Surety paid the redemption price.\*

Forgiveness through Christ’s atoning blood is *free, full, and unchangeable*. What we ask is, “*Forgiveness of our sins or debts.*” To forgive denotes to *dismiss*, to *remit*, to *cast away*. By a variety of terms, significant and expressive, Divine forgiveness is held out in the Scriptures. God is said to “cover” and “blot out” His people’s sins—to “cast them behind His back,” to “cast them into the depths of the sea,” to “remember them no more.” Reconciled through the atonement of the Substitute, He is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not

\* In the Liturgy of the Church of England neither the words *debts* nor *sins* are mentioned as in the petitions given by the two evangelists. Instead, the expression is—“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” This, though probably borrowed from the Saviour’s words (Matt. vi. 14, 15), in enforcing the duty of forgiveness, is obviously doing violence to the great Model Prayer. Besides, it risks the danger of limiting the word *trespasses*, according to its ordinary application, to transgressions of the law, or “sins of commission,” and overlooking the sins of nature and sins of omission. It were certainly much better to use always the words of the great teacher Himself in uttering the Lord’s Prayer, and say, “Forgive us our debts,” than to displace them by the words of a human formulary.

imputing to men their trespasses. He is "waiting to be gracious," and is a God ever "ready to pardon." He "delights in mercy"—awaits the penitent sinner's return; and in freely forgiving his many and great provocations, He gets glory to His name above that which accrues to His justice in punishing transgressors according to the demerit of their deeds. There is "forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Ps. cxxx. 4, 7).

The two great topics revealed in the Bible are *man's sin* and *God's way of salvation*, made known by extending to the individual forgiveness. Sin, which prevails everywhere, though few know it aright, like a dense cloud hides God from man's view, and spreads a dismal gloom over his state and future destinies. Yet it is the means of revealing God in the most illustrious and endearing aspect of His character. It manifests the depths of His sovereign love, and discloses the great benevolent purposes of His will. He "waits to be gracious," and "multiplies to pardon." The way in which He extends forgiveness to the sinner, through the gift and atoning death of His Son, will ever be the wonder of holy angels, and the burden of the praises of redeemed men. Angels did not know God fully till they saw the outgoing of His love in providing a Saviour for lost sinners, and till they beheld the wonders of redemption complete. He "was seen of angels," chiefly in His obedience unto death. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (1 Tim. iii. 16; Eph. iii. 10). The gospel method of forgiveness is the grand way of making known to men the

enormous evil of sin, and its tremendous consequences, and of exciting hatred to it. We only know sin when it is forgiven; and as we experience pardoning mercy, we learn to depart from all iniquity.\* In God freely forgiving rebel sinners, and restoring the guilty and polluted to full favour and acceptance, we see the most illustrious display of His character and perfections. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” (Ps. lxxxv. 10). As we “taste and see that the Lord is gracious,” with wonder and adoring praise we exclaim, “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.” (Micah vii. 18). “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name; . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” (Ps. ciii. 1-3).

To offer this petition aright, and to expect a favourable answer, there must be a *deep sense of sin* and *sincerity of heart* in seeking forgiveness from God. We come to Him who is of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” and with whom “evil shall not dwell.” To ask pardon in a cold formal manner, with only a vague, general sense of sin, is a high provocation to the holy Lord God. We are taught to plead for the blessing with all *earnestness and importunity*. “For Thy name’s sake, pardon mine

\* It is the just conception of *Dr. Owen*, as expressed in his excellent work on *PSALM ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH*, that “the way of gospel forgiveness is a mystery which human reason of itself is wholly unable to fathom, and that none but those who are subjects of regenerating grace can understand it aright!”

iniquity, for it is great." "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercy blot out my transgressions." (Ps. xxv. 11; li. 1). In humble *penitence* we should recognise and confess our sins against God. Our prayer is not a loud cry for mercy, as that which some utter in the agonies of death who die impenitent and in despair, but the prayer of a broken and contrite spirit; with sins innumerable, seen and felt in their aggravations and demerit, and godly sorrow and hatred of them, and turning to God. The *confession* required in the petition must *be free, full, and particular*; and in every prayer for pardoning mercy there must be sincere deep humiliation for sins of heart and life. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me." (Psalm xl. 12). In the words of a dying believer, we should confess, "Duties unfulfilled; words unspoken or spoken lightly, violently, or untruly; holy relationship neglected; days wasted, and now gone for ever; evil thoughts once cherished, which are ever re-appearing as fresh as when they were first admitted into the heart; talents cast away; afflictions trifled with; light within turned to darkness—such is our debt, our transgression, our sin." †

† A Christian father of the fourth century, says—"Call not yourselves righteous, as though ye had no cause to say, 'Forgive us our debts.' Though ye abstain from murder . . . and such other sins I do not name, . . . still there is no want of occasions on which a man may sin. A man sins when he sees with pleasure what he ought not to see. How great sins doth the dead tongue commit! How often do we pray and our



The petition should be offered *in faith*. We should believe in Him to whom we pray as a “God ready to pardon,” as well as a sin-hating God. We present our supplications for forgiveness in the name of Christ, who has been set forth as a propitiation, and who is our Advocate in heaven, whose blood is ever pleading with God for forgiveness for the guilty. We should accept the invitations of mercy, and embrace the promises of forgiveness and reconciliation. The brief article in the apostle’s creed, “*I believe in the forgiveness of sin*”—the announcement of which by an aged monk brought peace to the troubled mind of *Luther*—when received in faith, is still sufficient to allay distress of spirit, and to impart comfort to the contrite in heart.

We should pray for forgiveness in *hope*, and when bestowed it will fill us with abounding and substantial joy. Forgiveness is never to be sought from God in a desponding spirit. The language of despair is wholly unsuited to a suppliant at the throne which is surrounded by the rainbow, the emblem of covenant mercy. He that sits upon it is more ready, at all times, to give than we are to ask. He is our Father, ever ready to welcome back a

thoughts are elsewhere, as though we forgot before whom we are standing, or before whom we are prostrating ourselves! If all these things be collected together against us, will they therefore not overwhelm us because they are small faults! What matter is it whether lead or sand overwhelm us? The lead is all one mass; the sand is small grains, but by their great number they overwhelm thee. So thy sins are small. Seest thou not how thy rivers are filled, and the lands are wasted by small drops? They are small, but they are many. Such is our ‘debt,’ our ‘trespass,’ our ‘sin.’” The “*Lord’s Prayer*.” By C. J. Vaughan, D.D., p. 129.



returning prodigal, and to receive to favour a wayward, rebellious child. We should come before Him with hope in His mercy. In the greatness of His tender compassion and love He declares—"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will no more remember thy sins." The answer to the petition granting forgiveness is fitted to inspire "*full assurance of hope to the end*," and to give peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. Forgiveness of sin, through the atonement of Christ, causes "joy in heaven" with the persons of the blessed Trinity, and among holy angels and the spirits of the redeemed made perfect. The sense of pardon fills the souls of believers on earth "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy of the Lord, pure, elevated, heavenly, is their strength, peace, and comfort, and the earnest of the everlasting inheritance. How fervently, constantly, hopefully should we plead for ourselves, and thus, on the footing of the Saviour's merits, "Forgive us our sins!"

The spirit in which we are to present the petition for forgiveness is indicated, secondly, in the words, "AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS." In Luke xi. 4 the fuller expression is—"For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." The "*as*" here does not mean to state a comparison between God's forgiveness and ours, much less to declare the ground for which we look for pardon from God.\* It might

\* "It is hardly possible to imagine a more effectual expedient to promote the forgiveness of injuries than this of making it a part of our daily prayers, to ask such pardon from God as we impart to our offending brethren."—*Doddridge*.

be rendered, as in other Scripture passages, “*since*,” intending an appeal to the Divine omniscience that we are of a merciful, forgiving spirit. The foundation of our forgiveness by God is exclusively of His mercy through Christ; our forgiving fellow-men is the revealed condition of our receiving the blessing in a like sense, as faith and sanctification are *conditions of connection in the covenant* towards the reception of life eternal. No holiness of ours is in any sense meritorious of heaven; yet “without holiness we cannot see the Lord.” So, a free forgiving spirit is the true *test* of our state and character before God. This is the evidence that we are subjects of pardoning mercy. Without it we prove against ourselves that we do not know God as the God of love and mercy, and we have not tasted the blessing of a gracious pardon. The *unforgiving* are the *unforgiven*.\* When we declare that we forgive our debtors, it does not refer to pecuniary debts—though there may arise cases in which mercy towards fellow-men should be shown in cancelling debts which they owe us. Forgiveness in creatures is the same in *kind* as that which is in God toward us, though vastly inferior in *degree*. The debts for which others are our debtors are the wrongs and injuries which in any way they do us, and these we are required to forgive in the same way as God pardons our many and great offences against His law. No truth is taught more plainly in the Bible than that forgiving those who injure us is indispensable to the expectation of ourselves obtaining forgiveness. Our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere, reiterates with special

\* “It means not equality in the degree, but conformity in the thing.”—*Leighton*.

emphasis this truth—"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." Before He had declared—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." And again—"When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father which is in heaven may forgive your trespasses."

This forgiving disposition is opposed to *mere restraint*, or *angry passions* and the *spirit of revenge*, and to all contempt of those who have injured us, as if they were beneath our notice. This has no resemblance to the love and kindness of our Father in heaven, and is not Christ-like. The spirit of gospel forgiveness is a disposition implanted by the spirit of grace and love. It consists in forbearance and tender compassion toward those who have injured us, with an earnest desire for their welfare. We are required to manifest this forgiving spirit in no reluctant, niggard manner, and by taking all proper steps for outward reconciliation. We should be foremost in making overtures of reconciliation to an offending brother, and be prompt and cordial in receiving him to renewed friendship and fellowship. We should bury the weapons of strife, and blot the offence out of the records of memory, as well as forgive it. Repeated injuries done us are to be met by repeated acts of forgiveness. "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." This only is Christian forgiveness; it is doing to fellow-men as God does to us, and is the clearest manifestation of our being pardoned, and of the spirit of grace dwelling in the heart.

This forgiving disposition is inseparably connected with a *deep sense of one's own sin and apprehension of the Divine mercy*. If we see our sins against God to be like “ten thousand talents,” all the injuries which are inflicted on us by fellow-men will appear in comparison but as “five hundred pence;” and if God has forgiven freely and fully our great debt, we will be constrained in like manner to forgive every one that is indebted to us. Of ourselves we are, by nature, indisposed to forgive the slights and injuries which are done us by others; even when we are taught by the precepts and examples of the word the duty, we are slow to learn, and our spirit and conduct are often lamentably at fault. We cherish resentment; the memory is retentive of the sense of injury received, whether real or imaginary; we are reluctant to forgive the offender; or we deal out forgiveness in a partial, grudging spirit. We should see how unlike all this is to the manner in which we hope for forgiveness from God, without which we must be miserable. The right offering of the petition implies the daily inspection of our own spirit, without which we are in danger of deceiving ourselves, and of tempting God to deny us the pardon we seek, and to leave us under condemnation.

How solemnly is the duty of cherishing constantly a forbearing, forgiving spirit taught us in this petition! If we hate a brother, we cannot love God. Prayer is an abomination in His sight.\* As we

\* A distinction has always been made, by God's servants, between forgiving the wrongs which are done against themselves, and their forgiving what is done against the cause of God and truth. Martyrs at the stake or on the scaffold, praying like Christ, have forgiven their persecutors for the



daily go to God to ask pardon for innumerable sins of which we are conscious, and feel that without this we have no blessing, we appeal to His omniscience that we forgive, from the heart, those who trespass against us. What a fearful self-deception and mocking of God is this, if we are relentless, unforgiving, and revengeful! If we hate a brother, we cannot love God. Regarding iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us, and our prayer is an abomination in His sight.\* To harbour in our bosom resentment, have a memory retentive of slight provocations and injuries received from others, to manifest reluctance to forgive personal offences, or to deal out forgiveness to fellow-men in a partial, grudging spirit, and to reclaim the boon afterwards—all this is in direct opposition to the spirit of the petition, and shows our insincerity in offering the prayer, and our ignorance of the nature of true gospel forgiveness.

A prevailing, merciful, forgiving spirit is the evidence of growth in grace, and of high attainment in the Divine life. "To err is human, to forgive Divine." By cherishing such a disposition we become assimilated to our Father in heaven, and we are made Christlike. When, by cruel hands, He was crucified, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This spirit has dis-

injuries they inflicted, while, at the same time, they have left them to the judgment of God for their opposition and enmity to Christ's cause. David, who could bless the Lord for forgiving all his iniquities, prayed also, "Lord, remember not the sins of my youth." (Ps. xxv. 7). God remembers no more, but saints themselves cannot forget them, and can never cease to mourn with godly sorrow on account of them.

\* Psalm lxvi. 18.



tinguished true servants of Christ in all ages. Stephen, the proto-martyr of Christianity, as enraged enemies were stoning him to death, kneeled down and prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” So have done multitudes who have won the martyr’s crown. It is related of Archbishop *Cranmer* that the chief way of obtaining a special interest in his prayers, and to gain a kindness from him, was to do him a personal injury. Let us labour thus to make progress in the Divine life, and to ennoble our character. As we keep the pattern of our blessed Master more constantly before our eyes, and labour to imitate Him in meekness and forgiveness of enemies, we shall be transformed into His image, till we shall be fully like Him, and behold His face in righteousness.\*

*Finally.* How unspeakably *excellent* and *universally beneficial* is the spirit of forgiveness! It is the fruit of the love of God to us, and is the proper expression

\* “O that the divine pattern of our blessed Master were more constantly before the eye of His own followers! That meek and forgiving spirit of His, like ‘the angel standing in the sun,’ was the brightest of that bright assemblage of excellences that were His unequal adornment. The impressions which men receive of His religion are, to no small extent, derived from the spirit and conduct of His disciples. Hatred, ill-will, and revenge are not the most convincing evidence of the power of Christianity; and in giving way to them His disciples obstruct the influence of those truths which are the power of God to salvation. While, on the other hand, the kind and conciliatory spirit of the gospel, expressed especially in the forgiveness of injuries, wins upon the suspicion and jealousy of its opposers, and extorts a tribute of respect, if not of admiration, for principles of such efficacy over the turbulent passions of men.”—“*The Mercy-Seat.*” By Gardiner Spring, D.D., p. 170, 171.

of our love to Him. As He loved us when yet sinners—abject and vile, reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son, and draws “with cords of love and bands of a man”—this, properly understood, must lead us to be reconciled to fellow-men who have offended us, to overlook their faults, cover their sins with the mantle of charity, to love them with a pure heart, and do all offices of kindness toward them. This spirit prevailing will heal strifes and prevent alienation in families and among relatives. It will make the domestic mansion the place where love perpetually reigns in every relation—in all the thoughts, words, and actions. Divisions and animosities will thus cease in the church, and the “unfeigned love of the brethren” will present the clearest, fullest evidence of being true disciples of the loving Saviour, as its exhibition will be the greatest power for the world’s conversion. It will be the means for terminating wars throughout the earth, and of allaying and casting out an ambitious, revengeful, martial spirit. Instead of this, peace and concord, on the footing of truth, shall be universally established among the nations of the earth. “He shall speak peace to the heathen.” “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall the people learn war any more.” Soon as this forgiving temper shall become the ruling principle of man’s conduct, there shall no place be found in their hearts for unworthy suspicions—for hatred, or jealousy, or revenge. Instead of aggravating offences, and rejoicing in the calamities of enemies, they shall love and pray for them; and by acts of kindness and sympathy “heap coals of fire on their

head.” In the church and throughout civil society, and in all the relations of life, alienations and enmity will cease; and the precious fruits of Divine forgiveness, known and welcomed in all parts of the world, will bring blessing and happiness to the universal family of man.

“ The quality of mercy is not strained;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is thrice blessed;  
It blesseth him who gives, and him who takes.  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes  
The sceptred monarch better than his crown.”

## SECTION VIII.—SIXTH PETITION.

“AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.”

THIS petition is closely connected with that which precedes. When we ask forgiveness for the past we express concern for the future. If conscious of the commission of past sin, we will strive to avoid committing it again. We confess to God our *guiltiness*, and then we deprecate our *danger*. Even were our former sins blotted out, from corruption remaining within us and evil surrounding us we are liable to turn aside, and to relapse again into sin and folly. Sensible of our own weakness, warned of the number and power of spiritual foes, and having had painful experience of our constant proneness to be overcome of evil, and to be seduced into grievous falls, we are taught to ask, as to us of prime necessity and importance, “*Lead us not into temptation.*” This suggests the danger dreaded—*temptation*, how we seek not to be *led* into it, and how we are to *be concerned* for others as well as ourselves, “*lead us not,*” &c.

TEMPTATION, which we dread, and from which we pray to be kept, in its radical sense is *a trial or exploration*; and is used throughout the Scriptures for such a trial as affords proof of man’s character, and draws out what is within him. It is sometimes employed in a good sense, as when God is said to have tempted Abraham. He tried him in such a way as to exhibit and strengthen the faith that was in him; showing him to be “the friend of God,” and a bright example to all future believers. Fre-

quently the term *temptation* is used in the sense of being led aside and seduced into sin. Almost all that we meet with in the world—all outward stations, conditions, and circumstances, are appointed to us for trial, to test our character, show our ability and integrity, or discover our weakness, and to bring into manifestation the ruling principle of our hearts, and the aims that we propose for our lives. As coming from God, temptations are sent in sovereign wisdom and love for our good—to try and strengthen the grace which He has conferred. Hence we are enjoined to count it all joy when "we enter into divers temptations," from the subsequent precious fruits which the trials yield. But when by temptation is meant, as it seems to be in this passage, the occasion and provocation to sin, we are called to dread it, and taught to watch and pray that we do not enter into it.

Though God never tempts any in the sense of infusing evil into their hearts, or of seducing them into sin, yet in many ways He tries men. He places them in circumstances in which their character is tested, and the dispositions of their hearts are brought to light. Without compromising His own rectitude and goodness, He disposes of them so as to show themselves and others what is their real state, and what will be their final condition. Some are tried with health, and prosperity, and riches; and others with sickness, and adversity, and poverty. The stations and offices in which they are placed, the society with which they are surrounded, the reputation in which they are held by fellow-men, their natural temperament, the profession they make, and the privileges they enjoy or are deprived of—all these become trials or temptations, bringing



out motives, discovering secret springs of action, serving for the development of character, and preparing for the future destiny. God may bring us into such circumstances in His providence, as by giving strength to our inward corruptions, may give Satan and his instruments peculiar advantage over us. This He does to prove the reality of grace within, show the power of indwelling sin, and manifest the sincerity or hypocrisy of our profession. The entire way of providence may be regarded as a series of temptations designed to test character, and to prove beneficial to God's people. He said to Israel in the wilderness, as He virtually does to all the redeemed in passing through this world—“Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no.” (Deut. viii. 2).

But *temptation from Satan* is chiefly the matter to be deprecated, and it is in reference principally to his onsets that this petition is offered. The prime leader of fallen spirits, as his name signifies, is the *adversary* of God and of the saints; and this he shows himself by trying to infuse evil into their hearts, and leading them into sin. Satan is a constant deceiver and tempter. He has great power, and has been long practised in the arts of seduction. He made his fiercest onset on the Saviour as He entered on His public ministry; and though He vanquished him, the tempter only departed for a season; and throughout His whole life on earth the Saviour was in constant conflict with the prince of darkness and his numerous instruments. He “suffered being tempted,” and He is therefore “able to succour

them who are tempted." (Hebrews ii. 18). There are none of the servants of God who are exempted from the frequent temptations of the adversary. The most distinguished of these have always been thus the most tried. He knows their weakest part, and against it he chiefly points his assaults. He tempts them when alone in the closet. He appears among the sons of God when they come to present themselves, in the sanctuary, before the Lord. He seeks to prevent the saving effects of the word by tempting alike the preacher and the hearers; and the house of prayer is scarcely quitted when Satan's emissaries, like the birds that gathered up the seeds scattered by the way side, take away the seeds of truth from the memory. In sacred places, and in scenes of the highest spiritual privilege, the tempter plies his temptations. His fiery darts are discharged thickly, disturbing peace, and wounding and enflaming, even when they cannot destroy. At the foot of the mount of revelation Moses was tried with the revels of the camp, as the people worshipped the golden calf; and no sooner had the favoured disciples come down from the mount of transfiguration, than they were assailed with the onset of the enemy; and Jesus Himself was tried with the unbelieving cavils of his instruments. In the pithy language of *John Newton*, it may be declared—"It is the man bringing his dividend from the bank door who has most cause to dread the pilferer's hand." Satan tempts God's people on the ground of worldly interests and circumstances, and in the sphere of their profession and spiritual privileges. He aims chiefly to subvert the faith of the church, to corrupt its ordinances, to mar its union, and to seduce to declension and apostacy. Besides his common "devices," there

are special seasons—“the hour of temptation”—when temptations, which were before resisted and were of limited extent, acquire potent strength; and many overcome by the enemy abandon the truth which they once held, and are given over to apostacy. It comes “upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” (Rev. iii. 10). Holy Scripture throughout, the experience of God’s people, and the whole history of the church and of the world, bear testimony to the presence and extent of the danger arising from temptation.

Whether we regard the trial as coming from God’s hand or from Satan’s, it concerns us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” This is not merely the language of self-distrust and instinctive shrinking from danger, nor simply a prayer for “support and deliverance when we are tempted.” The original Greek word has a stronger meaning. It denotes “introduce us not,” and is a petition against being *sucked or drawn of our own will* into temptation. Knowing our own weakness, we ask God of His mercy to dispose of us and our circumstances so that we may not, through opportunity, approach too near to sin, and it gain power over our souls. We may well ask that God would, if it pleased Him, spare us from the terrible scrutinies which He sometimes makes of His chosen servants, as when He called Abraham to give up the child of joy and promise; and when He gave Job into the hands of Satan; only limiting his power that his life should be spared; and when Satan sought to have the disciples, that he might “*sift* them as wheat.”

God *leads* into temptation His people; not, as has been often said, by *causing* them to be led, but He *permits* them to be led for holy and wise purposes,

to show them their sin and weakness, to teach them effectually their only ground of dependence and safety, and to minister to them salutary and needful instruction for all their future life. He withdraws the restraints of His grace, and gives them over for a time to the power of temptation. He again limits the rage of the tempter and the range and influence of the temptation. And He ultimately delivers out of it; and, in the experience of His saints, educes good out of their falls, such as they could never otherwise attain.

The petition instructs us to know our *constant danger* in being exposed to the evils and power of temptation, to be sensible of our own *weakness* and insufficiency for avoiding and overcoming temptation. Hence we should greatly dread temptation. We are taught, moreover, the all-sufficiency of God to uphold, support, and give us the victory. The sense of our danger should lead us to vigilant, constant watchfulness; while the knowledge of our own weakness, and of strength and sufficiency being in God, should stir us up to fervent prayer for Divine keeping. "God's motive is love, and His object is our good," in all the trials which He sends. The temptations which He appoints to His people bring to light hidden sins and infirmities. They are designed to deepen our humility and strengthen our faith, to lead us to closer fellowship with God, and prepare us for greater usefulness in the world. When exposed to Satan's temptations, of whatever kind and from whatever quarter, we should be concerned not to be "ignorant of his devices." His principal aim in tempting us is not so much our destruction as to obscure and take away God's glory. He seeks to



break the relation between us and God, and to alter our attitude toward God. He suggests that God's threatenings are not true; he leads to question and disbelieve His promises, and he holds out expectations of good apart from God, and in the way of rebellion against Him. Our safety lies alone in refusing to listen to the tempter, and in betaking ourselves wholly to God. Our comfort is that God *leads*, and that He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will, with every temptation, make a way of escape. At times, when there is a sudden and fierce onset of the enemy, we should flee temptation, remove at once from the scene of danger, and tear away the thoughts and senses from the forbidden object. At other times we should “resist the devil, and he will flee from us.” By the shield of faith we “quench the fiery darts of the wicked one,” and by “the sword of the Spirit”—the word of God skilfully wielded, we vanquish the enemy, as the Captain of salvation, in His great temptation, once, twice, and again foiled the tempter, by declaring—“It is written.” We should diligently study the clear and copious teaching of the Scriptures, and learn to use it for practical purposes, that we may be furnished with proof armour when we stand in conflict with Apollyon. Above all, our whole strength and support, all our safety and deliverance amidst diversified temptations, are in Him who obeyed and suffered being tempted, and who is ever able and willing to succour them that are tempted. Christ is the victorious leader of the Lord's host; and those whom He conducts, He preserves from the power of every enemy. He is our great High Priest, the Advocate who stands up perpetually to meet the accusations of the adversary,



and is ever ready to rebuke him. His love and sympathy are all-sustaining in the hour of temptation. Above all, "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15). We have therefore all encouragement confidently to rely on Him for active, tender, constant sympathy—for support, comfort, and full deliverance. Our great concern should be, as we plead not to be led into temptation, to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, and to gaze away from ourselves and from all else. We should ever aim, as new temptations arise, or as we are called to the heat of the conflict, to concentrate the heart's thoughts and desires upon Him who "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly on His cross," and who is ever able and ready to keep us from falling. Justly has it been said, "To look unto Jesus only is our safety." The last device of our adversary, when he cannot make us look elsewhere, is to turn off our eyes from our Saviour to our faith; and thus to discourage us if it is weak, and to fill us with pride if it is strong; and, both in the one case and in the other, to enfeeble us; for it is not from faith that strength comes, but it is from the Saviour by faith; it is not by looking unto our own look, but by looking unto Jesus." \*

We pray in this petition for *others* as well as ourselves—"Lead *us* not." This teaches to intercede much for all that in any way are exposed to temptation; for the young, in the time of ardent passions and buoyant hopes, amid the manifold temptations and snares of an evil world; for Christian professors and members of the church; for servants of God in high and influential positions; for tried, tempted,

afflicted saints; for witnesses for the truth, and the whole church in times of prevailing temptation. We should plead for the recovery of them that are fallen; and continually should we seek for others, equally as for ourselves, that all their temptations should be ordered and overruled for God's glory and their spiritual and eternal benefit. He that educes good out of evil, and subordinates all things to His own glory, can and will avenge His own elect on the tempter and destroyer, and make their severest trials and even their grievous falls conducive to His own glory and their present and eternal good.

As we constantly offer this prayer, we must beware at all times of rushing into temptation. “A burnt child dreads the fire;” if we have been rescued from the tempter, we should watch and guard against the least contact with whatever might bring us again under his power. We should greatly dread being seducers of others—of leading any in the smallest measure into temptation. Neglect of prayer, and all forgetfulness of God, invite to temptation. We may rest with confidence that we will certainly be brought safely through the temptation that is of God's *sending*.

The following appropriate remarks by an excellent Jansenist expositor show the spirit in which we should pray for forgiveness—“This petition we ought to utter in the spirit of a sick man, imploring and expecting the aid of his physician, although at the same time acknowledging that he himself deserves to be abandoned by him. The way of salvation is a way of humility; and the grace of Christ is a grace given in conflict. Nothing more humbles us, and renders us more watchful, and drives us

more often to the weapons of faith and prayer, than this inability to claim for ourselves any good; this discovery that we are in ourselves capable of all wickedness; this presence of an inward foe who leaves us not an instant of repose or of assurance; this depending each moment on a grace that is not due, and of which we are altogether undeserving. Let us adore the wise contrivance of our God in the work of our salvation, and let us abandon ourselves to Him, with a firm confidence that He will not abandon us to ourselves." \*

\* *Quernel* on Matt. vi. 13.

## SECTION IX.—SEVENTH PETITION.

“ BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.”

“ Restraining prayer, we cease to fight ;  
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright,  
And Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

THOSE who make the number of petitions in the model prayer to be six consider the words, “ Deliver us from evil,” to be the second half of the petition, and allege that the use of the conjunction “ *but* ” sanctions this view. This, however, cannot be regarded as a sufficient reason for making the two one petition, though it does show that the two clauses are closely connected. It is certainly better to regard the expression as a distinct separate petition, and as much more extensive in meaning than our Westminster Divines and others speak of it, when they limit it to deliverance from the evil of temptation.

As the original Greek term may be taken in the masculine as well as the neuter form, the petition has been explained by some critics and expositors, as “ Deliver from the evil one.”\* But from the comprehensive character of the different brief petitions of the prayer, and the place which this occupies as that in which our desires for blessing from the heavenly Father die away, it would appear much more

\* This is the view of Bengel and Dodderidge, of Dr. D. G. Monrad, in the “ *World of Prayer*,” and of others.

preferable to regard it according to the analogy of faith as uttered in the broader sense.

This last petition, though briefly expressive, is one of the most important. While on earth, we are in a world sinful and under the curse; and at all stages of life, and in all conditions, we are beset with evils innumerable, from which Divine power and mercy alone can deliver us. All the previous petitions of the prayer, whether for ourselves or for others, have been said to be summed up in this one. Whether we seek that God's name may be glorified, His kingdom established, His will done on earth, our bodily wants supplied, our sins forgiven, and ourselves and others preserved from temptations, we are praying that all that injures God's cause and glory may be done away, and that all that would hinder the full supply of our wants, temporal and spiritual, may be removed. This petition, too, leads us to look beyond our present scene of labour and conflict—of sin and suffering, to the heavenly state where the evils of earth are unknown, and where saints, gathered home to their Father's house, have “fulness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore.” We are taught herein to pray for deliverance from all kinds, degrees, and occasions of evil, to seek for present freedom from their pressure and power, and for final, complete emancipation and victory.

The evils that affect human beings, the fruit of the fall, and the consequent curse, have been commonly classified as—1. *Physical*; and 2. *Moral* evils. Of the former are the pains, privations, and sufferings that affect our bodies and outward condition and relations, anxieties, fears, and distresses of mind, public calamities of various kinds, and tem-



poral death. These are the consequences of man's original apostacy, and are penal in their nature, aggravated and intensified to those who remain under the wrath of God. Moral evil, from which we seek deliverance, consists in the power and pollution of sin in our hearts and lives, the allurements, snares, temptations, and deceits of an evil world, the malignity, subtilty, and power of evil spirits, the fearful wrath of God, death under the curse, and the last judgment and final misery of the impenitent and ungodly.

We are not taught in the petition to pray for entire exemption from physical evil of every kind or degree. A measure of affliction and suffering we may expect; and even “much tribulation” may prove most beneficial in the lot of the righteous. But through the work of Christ physical evils are unstinged to God's people. They are to them the discipline of the covenant, and are tokens of the Father's love. They are for their “profit,” as by them their corruptions are purged, and they become “partakers of God's holiness,” and they afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.” Even while subjected to these evils, the saints are “preserved from trouble” (Ps. xxxii. 7), for the curse is taken away, and their spiritual consolations are made to abound; at length they are encompassed with triumphant songs of deliverance. Instead of effectually hurting them, these evils are made to minister to their spiritual good, in the increase of holiness and elevation of character, as they work out for them at length “a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor. iv. 17). The evil from which we chiefly seek deliverance is *moral* evil. It is that which is *within* us and everywhere

*around* us. Sin dwelling in our hearts, and defiling the conscience, is the great evil from which we first and above all need emancipation. *Augustine's* prayer—"Lord, save me from that evil man myself," we should offer daily, and continue to present it, till the power of corruption is broken, and freed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we perfect holiness in the fear of God. Properly has it been said, "The worst evil is the least sin." Only saints are duly sensible of the unspeakable evil of sin. It is a mark of true saintship to feel the burden of sin, and to pray and labour continually for freedom from it. This moral evil is manifold and complicated; and from its being the grand characteristic of fallen humanity, and from the close connection of sins of different kinds with one another, it is received as having a central unity—"a body of sin and death." In the original the words of the petition are, "Deliver us from *the* evil." Numerous as are our spiritual enemies, they are under the direction of one powerful leader. Sin dwells within, darkening the mind, polluting the heart and conscience, and evidencing its presence and power by innumerable acts of transgression. For the highest reasons, we should ever ask this deliverance from evil. Sin is "an evil and bitter thing," and when rightly viewed it becomes "exceeding sinful." Unlike physical evils, which in themselves have no moral turpitude, it is inherently dead. It corrupts and makes evil whatever it touches; it debases and brings to shame those who come under its power. Viewed as God sees it, it is loathsome, abominable, and destructive—ever hostile to His nature and government, spreading disorder and confusion through all His works. It mars all our duties, defiles the heart, and

life, and perverts all fellowship with God and the saints.

If the children of God become conscious of having fallen into sin, they are greatly humbled under a sense of their vileness; and this prompts their fullest confessions and their most earnest supplications. They take to themselves “shame and confusion of face;” and in penitent prayer they plead, “Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” “Free me, O God of my salvation, from blood-guiltiness.” “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” Sin brings with it suffering as well as shame. Sin and misery are inseparable. If indulged in, however secretly, it is vicious to the Christian’s influence and usefulness, as it is wholly destructive of spiritual joy and abiding peace. Above all, sin caused the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God! and to love and practise it is to “crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame,” and to count the blood whereby He was sanctified a “common thing.” The innumerable evils that are in the earth are the fruit and consequences of sin. This gives death its empoisoned sting, fills hell with its victims, and causes the unutterable woes of the lost through the countless ages of eternity.

This final petition is to be taken as a *prayer for deliverance from evil of whatever kind*, not only from sin—the one great moral evil, but from all its consequences, fully, finally, and for ever. When we offer it, we seek to be delivered from *evil men*, from their power as enemies, and from their temptations as seducers. In the inspired Psalms, which depict the sufferings, conflicts, and triumphs of the Captain of salvation, and which are, at the same time, “the

Bible of believing experience," dangers and trials from wicked men are the frequent matter of fervent prayer. From the powers of darkness, and from the evil of death under the curse, we need constant deliverance, and for this we should present continual prayer. The church while here, imperfect and militant, is exposed to numerous and great evils, from which she can only be delivered in answer to prayer. From error, corruption, and internal division she requires to be freed, that her fellowship may be blessed, and her power for good may be felt in the world. We are taught to pray for and expect deliverance from *evil systems* in the world—civil oppression, Popery, Mohammedanism, and pagan idolatry; and numerous Divine promises assure us that the day will come when all these shall be subverted; and the church, exalted on the top of the mountains, shall appear "most glorious, the joy of the whole earth." The countless evils, too, that prey upon society, and afflict and destroy nations, we should earnestly seek to be removed. These are ignorance, intemperance, vice, and ungodliness. Through the diffusion of Scriptural light the darkness of error will be dispelled, and the power of Christianity universally diffused will subvert the throne of wickedness, and banish ungodliness from the earth.

This deliverance from evil, we are taught by the form of the petition, is to be sought for others as well as for ourselves—for brethren in the faith, for suffering relatives and saints, for the church, and for the universal family of mankind. It is to be asked from God in Christ. None other can deliver; and He is able and willing "to save to the uttermost." By the work of the Redeemer, the glorious Deliverer



sent to Zion, He has already judged the prince of this world, and conquered evil. He has vanquished Satan, unstinged trials and sorrows, and made outward evils and afflictions the discipline of the covenant, and rendered them conducive to the highest benefit of the subjects of them. The Saviour, in His last prayer, asks for His people, not that they should be taken out of the world, but that “they should be kept from the evil.” (John xvii. 10). He is exalted to glory, and “all power in heaven and earth” is given Him, that He may be fully adequate to this great work of deliverance. His faithful servants have ever experienced it, when exposed to great trial, and when all human help is vain. Jacob, at the close of life, invoked in prayer the Angel of the Covenant that “redeemed him from all evil.” (Gen. xlviii. 16). The Apostle Paul, freed from the grasp of the persecutor, while rendering thanks for support and strength administered, expresses joyful confidence for the future—“The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom.” (2 Tim. iv. 18). When the saints stand in full prospect of death, the promise of the presence of Christ animates their hopes, and raises them above all discouraging fears—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” (Psalm xxiii. 4). To the redeemed, as their souls at death enter into the heavenly rest, and when their bodies are re-animated at the resurrection, the mystery of evil is fully solved. The purposes for which it was sent, the ends which it subserves, and the blessed issue, appear in bright and cloudless manifestation. There shall be no more pain, or suffering, or death.



“Everlasting joy” is “upon their heads,” and “sorrow and sighing” have “fled for ever away.” In the glorious future that awaits the church and the nations at the blessed millennium, the “Deliverer shall come unto Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” “All Israel shall be saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles come in.” (Isaiah lix. 26; Rom. xi. 26).

Let us, with full confidence in the promise, and animated by this blessed hope, constantly, fervently pray, in the expressive language of the English Liturgy—“By Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy cross and passion, by Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, *Good Lord deliver us.*” In all time of our tribulation, and in all time of our wealth; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, “GOOD LORD DELIVER US.”

## SECTION X.—THE CONCLUDING DOXOLOGY.

“FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND  
THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.”

WHETHER the words of the Doxology form a part of the model prayer which Christ taught His disciples, has been much disputed. They are not found in the prayer as it is given in Luke xi. 2-5. If we have regard to the *external* evidence, there is some ground for omitting them. They are not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts, though they are said to have a place in one of them. The conclusion of the prayer is wanting in the old Latin version, and in the Vulgate. The earliest Latin fathers, with the Greek commentators, generally pass it by without quoting or explaining it. On the other hand, it is a part of the prayer, as given in the Peshito-Syrian version, which was emitted as early as the second century, and in the three other Syrian and several other ancient versions. Though we may therefore hesitate to pronounce it an integral part of Matthew's gospel, yet a careful weighing of the whole evidence should lead us to avoid pronouncing it spurious. We concur with *Calvin* in viewing it as being “in close connection with, and aptly fitting the precedent portion of the prayer.” It would appear unlikely, from the manner of our Lord's instructing His disciples, and especially from the whole strain of the prayer, that He would close abruptly with the word “*evil.*” The omission of the words, on the second occasion in which He gave the prayer, may have arisen from His not designing to give an exact form

of prayer, to which He would always confine His disciples; or He may, of purpose, have omitted the words, leaving it to His servants, according to the free utterance of devotional feeling, to enforce the petitions with arguments supported by the Spirit.\* Regarding the Doxology as a singularly appropriate conclusion of the prayer, too full to be conceived and uttered by mere human wisdom, we take it as either spoken by the Lord in His first teaching, or afterwards given by Him as He was with His disciples in the daily prayer. To us they will be an eminently suitable vehicle for the outpouring of our hearts in the conclusion of all our prayers.

We may consider this Doxology in a *threefold* light, as—1. Reasons or arguments to enforce the prayer; 2. The expression of holy, joyful praise; and 3. A confirmation and declaration of full confidence that the prayer will be heard.

\* "The form of prayer in Matthew was evidently presented to the indiscriminate mass of His hearers, and amongst these were not only friends and disciples but the prejudiced also, and the hostile, and those little advanced in the knowledge of Himself and His mission and His kingdom. For their use He gave the form, closing with that general appeal to the character and rule and rights of God, which they were already prepared to receive, from similar language in the Old Testament. The other form in Luke was given to His *disciples*, and wanting this final argument with God, would have, apparently, in their minds the impression of a vacuity, a significant and emphatic break in the current of prayer, which the instruction elsewhere given to them, to ask all of the Father in *His*, the Messiah's name, would enable them to fill up in the appropriate manner. For that instruction explicitly to be given, even to His disciples, it was not yet the fitting time, until the wonders of His crucifixion and resurrection should have fully expounded, and finally and unequivocally sealed, His claims as the Christ of God, and as the way through whom only any can come to the Father."—*Williams*, on the "Lord's Prayer."

## I.—ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE PRAYER.

It is plain that the different expressions in this concluding part are used as reasons or pleas to enforce the various preceding petitions, as they are introduced with the connecting word *for* or *because*. It is equivalent to the suppliant declaring to the Object addressed in prayer reasons why his petitions, so comprehensive and important, should be granted. When we ask that God's name should be hallowed, that His kingdom may come, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven; when we beg from our Father in heaven the supply of our daily wants, that He would forgive our sins, preserve us from temptation, and deliver us from evil of every kind, we present, at the same time, pleas the fullest and most weighty to induce the Hearer of Prayer to grant our requests.

It has been justly said that all right prayer contains *argument*, either expressed or implied. Every request addressed, either to God or man, must be reasonable; and as God has the best means for requiring men to pray, so, in granting their petitions, He has regard to the most befitting considerations, whether in respect to His own glory or their state and circumstances. At all times that we approach to God's "seat," we should, as Job, "order our cause before Him;" we "should fill our mouths with arguments." (Job xxiii. 3, 4). If argument is withheld in prayer, it is often because the person praying has no right spiritual perception of the matter of prayer, or of the value of the things sought, or of God's way and design in granting them. In the case of believers praying, sometimes when the heart is deeply impressed and too full for utterance, petitions are poured forth in brief, weighty words,

without enlargement, and these imply volumes of argument. In all the instances of earnest prevailing prayer by God's servants recorded in Scripture, the petitions are enforced by appropriate pleas or arguments. Such are those of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Hezekiah, Elijah, Nehemiah, Daniel; and, above all, the great intercessory prayer of the Saviour before His crucifixion, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. All these are replete with absorbed thought and weighty argument; marked by simplicity and energy, they exhibit the earnest pleadings of the heart. They show the power and prevalence of prayer, as that of a man expostulating with God as with his friend; and God, in wondrous condescension, and in the tenderness of His compassion, stooping to hear the earnest cries of the needy, and showing Himself ready to answer their fervent pleas for deliverance and blessing.

The arguments which prevail with God in prayer, such as the Spirit suggests, *are taken from God Himself*. The kingdom is wholly His, and not that of any creature. Power alone belongs to Almighty God; and to Him pertains the whole undivided glory. All that we can plead for ourselves is our sin—our want and wretchedness; and there is no merit in any creature that can furnish to us the least ground of confidence and hope. It is for His great "name's sake" we ask. We put God in remembrance of His covenant; and plead His truth and faithfulness, in seeking the fulfilment of His promises. The gift of His Son, and the merits of the Redeemer, ever form the strongest pleas of the suppliant for mercy and salvation. All the merit is His only. The fulness of His bounty and grace is an argument sufficient to expect the supply of all wants,



temporal and spiritual; as the glory of giving to the undeserving and sinful will redound to Him exclusively for ever. The glory of all Divine perfections harmonised is manifested in conferring on the guilty and miserable the blessings of life and salvation.

Each one of the weighty expressions in this ascription furnishes an argument most suitable for obtaining the blessings sought.

*"Thine is the kingdom."* He is universal Sovereign; all is under His control—all is subject to His absolute disposal. He is sovereign in nature, providence, and grace. He reigns on earth, supreme over all creatures and events. His throne is in the heavens, having all agencies and instruments ever ready to execute His purpose. The stars of universe are in His hand, so that whatever is required to execute the counsel of His will, and to supply His people's need, He can and will supply. Because His is the kingdom, we may fully believe that when we pray that the "reign of grace" be set up in the heart, that sinners be converted, believers increased in grace and established, Christianity spread in the world, the mediatorial kingdom universally established, and the kingdom of glory hastened, we may rest assured that these petitions will be heard and graciously answered. The honour of His administration is concerned; and all the power and influences of His vast kingdom are continually in operation to effect His glorious designs, and to secure that His blessed will shall be done in heaven and earth. Our petitions for daily bread, for the pardon of sin, for preservation from temptation and deliverance in it, and from all evil, are enforced by the same plea. The Mediator reigns in nature and providence; and from His exuberant bounty He is able and willing

to supply all the temporal wants of His people. He is exalted on the throne of grace, ready to forgive; and the pardons which He dispenses are given under His royal seal, and with princely munificence. His dominion is set up for the subversion of the empire of darkness; and He must reign till all opposing power and authority shall have been wholly subverted. By regal acts He rescues from suffering, overrules public calamities for good, thus advancing the kingdom of righteousness and peace in the earth; and ultimately delivering His saints from all kinds of evil, and bringing them to the kingdom of light and glory, where no kind of evil has an entrance, and good, unmixed and perfect, will be for ever enjoyed. Thus are we warranted to come to God with all our requests, for matters that concern His glory, and our wants of soul and body, and for time and eternity. He is God all-sufficient. In giving He consults the riches of His own munificence rather than our deserving or limited desires. He is honoured by His people asking whatever is contained in the boundless treasures of His kingdom. He gives with princely and unfailing liberality. His kingdom is extended and its glory promoted by the number and greatness of the gifts which He constantly bestows. For "*Thine is the kingdom*" is an argument, which, when rightly understood, and presented in prayer, prevails for the obtaining of manifold and richest blessings.

Such, too, is the plea—" *Thine is the power.*" His arm, outstretched in redemption, is an arm of might. All power pertains to Almighty God. In Christ, the Mediator, who is enthroned king in providence and grace and glory, and is exalted to dispense all the stores of the covenant, there is the greatest manifes-

tation of Divine power. He is the Mighty One, on whom the sinner's help was laid from eternity. He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to all that believe." Our whole dependence for all benefit and blessing that we need may rest safely on omnipotent power, and on unfailing covenant strength. All forces opposed to Him and the church's salvation He can and will overthrow. What is great and mighty He brings down; what is weak and small He exalts. His way in providence is to manifest His glorious power by subduing man's pride, raising up the humble and depressed, and by things that are not, bringing to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. His "eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9). He ever holds forth His omnipotence as the ground of all confidence of His people, and when He said to Abraham, "I am God Almighty." In times of conflict and felt weakness it concerns us to say as the patriarch of Uz—"I know that Thou canst do every thing;" and at all times our fullest trust should repose in Him "which was, and is, and is to come—the Almighty." The chief note of the church's perpetual praise is, "Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatever He pleased in the heavens and the earth, and in all deep places." What a powerful argument have we here to enforce all the petitions which we offer at the throne of grace! God is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." He has power to set up and advance His kingdom, to cause His will to be done on earth, to supply all temporal wants, to pardon many and great sins, to foil the tempter, and support and rescue the tempted, and to deliver from all evil. Let

it be ours always to "take hold of His strength," and to rely fully on omnipotent, unchangeable power. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for Thou renderest to every man according to his work." (Ps. lxii. 11, 12).

The final blessed result is presented in the last argument—"THINE IS THE GLORY FOR EVER." This is most comprehensive and expressive. The great end of all God's works and ways is His own glory, of which He is ever jealous. "His glory will He not give to another, nor His praise to graven images." To Him belongs the exclusive glory of being the Hearer of Prayer. His is the glory of amazing condescension in giving. In answering prayer, in what He gives, and how He gives to needy, sinful, perishing creatures, the glory of His justice, mercy, truth, and sovereignty appear in the most attractive splendour, beauty, and loveliness. While God's glory shines forth in all His works, it is especially resplendent in giving what His people pray for. He thus manifests Himself as the centre of life and light and bliss—the greatest of all Givers. His glory is the grand end in creation, providence, and redemption. With what confidence may we pray to Him, and say, as we address Him, "*Thine is the glory!*" Through regard to His own glory, He will forgive, sanctify, and bless all who, by faith, call upon His name.

The three great arguments in prayer are stated, with the emphatic addition at the close, "*for ever.*" The glorious Being whom we address in prayer is "from everlasting to everlasting God." Christ Jesus, in whom He is revealed and through whom prayer is offered, is the "Father of eternity," the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." When we pray aright, we look beyond time into eternity, and view



time as important and valuable, from its inseparable connection with eternity. In time, our eternal destiny is decided, and any moment of our present existence may have our eternal state involved in it. How solemn and expressive the statement—"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, *for ever!*" Earthly kingdoms decay and perish. Creature-power is limited and evanescent. The glory of human beings and of all earthly things vanishes like the day declining from its meridian brightness, or as a vision of the night. But the kingdom, power, and glory of Jehovah are susceptible of no change or diminution, and know no end. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of thy dominion there is no end." God's power, too, is eternal as well as omnipotent. He ever doeth great wonders. His arm is full of power and exalted in height. His "works show Him to be clothed and girt about with might." To the end of life, in death, and throughout eternity, the saints have all encouragement to lean upon the almighty, unfailing power of God; and the church, in all ages, has ground to praise Him as her rock and hiding place, and high tower. The glory, too, of Jehovah is for ever. When the glory of all created things languishes, the Creator's glory never fades, but shines forth brighter and brighter till time shall be no more, and throughout eternity. The saints' blessed hope is, that when time and time-scenes shall have passed away, the kingdom, power, and glory of God, in whom they trusted, of the Son who redeemed them, and of the Spirit who sanctified and led them, will be fully known and experienced in their wondrous results to all eternity. Nothing will diminish, nothing terminate this kingdom, power, and glory; for God, their own covenant-God, reign-



ing, acting, showing forth the fulness and effulgence of His glory, will be their everlasting portion.

II. The Doxology may be viewed as an *ascription of praise* to God as the Hearer of Prayer, in relation to every petition addressed to Him. Devout praise, the expression of elevated spiritual affections, is the proper language of the soul in communion with God. All right thoughts of God, all due meditation on His character and works, all spiritual discoveries made in His word, lead to praise. Prayer and praise are inseparably conjoined, as we find in the Book of Psalms throughout; and prayer, which is the grand expression of faith, ends in praise, and reaches its crown and consummation in it. The Apostle directs us, "in every thing by prayer and supplications, to make our requests known to *God with thanksgiving*." (Philippians iv. 6). All the prayers of eminent saints, recorded in the word, are intermingled with ascriptions of praise to Him who dwells among the cherubim, and inhabits the praises of Israel. Our Lord's frequent prayers and supplications to the Father on earth are constantly conjoined with grateful thanksgiving. It is noteworthy that the Book of Psalms in which, throughout, are set forth the spiritual desires and fervent prayers of the church, in labour, trial, and conflict, ends with joyful songs of praise. The last five or six Psalms contain no confessions or petitions, but are throughout unmingled praise, indicating that thus the saint's labours and prayers suitably terminate on earth, as his rest and triumph in God and His salvation begin in heaven.

Every expression of the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer may be taken as the ascription of lofty praise to the heavenly king. We bless Him, for to Him alone pertain the kingdom, and power, and glory. Like the venerable monarch of Israel, we exclaim,

with devout wonder and gratitude, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all." (1 Chron. xxix. 11). His greatness and power are the theme of His people's perpetual praise. "The Lord reigneth; He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself." (Psalm xciii. 1). "I will sing of Thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the morning." (Psalm lxx. 16). The ascription of glory to God in the highest is the chief employment of saints, in prayer, and all service on earth, as it is the delighted employment of the redeemed in heaven for ever. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus xv. 11). Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." (Ps. cxlv. 10; 11). The hosannas of prayer of the nations of the saved are destined to end with the hallelujahs of wrapt joyful praise. "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king." "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord." (Ps. cxlix. 2; cl. 6).

The closing word "AMEN" is wondrously significant and suitable. It denotes *stability, truth*, and expresses the confidence of the heart and the acceptance of prayer. It is itself a condensed, emphatic, petition—so LET IT BE; and is at once an expression of the desire and assurance to be heard and graciously answered. Believing in the truth of God's promises, and relying on the stability of His purpose and government, we cherish and avow our confident hope in a favourable answer of prayer.

This comprehensive word, which declares God's unchangeable truth and faithfulness, was, by Divine direction, used in the most solemn services of God's ancient people—in cases of adjudication before public festivals. It was the *response* of the congregations of the primitive Christian churches in public prayer and praise, and designed to be a standing ordinance for Christian congregations in all subsequent times. Amen is one of the names of Christ, as He reveals God's truth, confirms Divine promises, is the revealer of the Father's purpose, and the "faithful and true witness." It is at once the voice of faith, the soul of prayer, the answer of a good conscience, the renewed dedication to God of the penitent, believing suppliant. When we say from the heart "*Amen*," we attach our strongest confirmation to all the petitions contained in the prayer. We declare our firmest belief that they shall be heard, and assuredly answered by our Father in heaven; and we renew the full surrender of ourselves and all that is ours to Him who has the sovereign and exclusive right to us, and all our homage, and service, and submission. This at once attests our *sincerity*, and pledges our *trust* in the God of our mercies. To all His commands to do His will, and to all His requirements to suffer His appointments, we offer an unreserved and cordial Amen. Thus praying and praising, we reach at length that blessed state, where triumphant praises are perpetual, and we join in the rapturous song which begins and ends with the emphatic *Amen*.  
 "AMEN, BLESSING AND GLORY AND WISDOM AND  
 THANKSGIVING, AND HONOUR AND POWER AND MIGHT,  
 BE UNTO OUR GOD, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."



